

# Lothian Talk

<http://lothiansmemberscentre.homestead.com>



Lothians Members Centre Newsletter of the Scottish Wildlife Trust

Spring 2009

## SWT Lothians Ceilidh with the Crowdiehouse Band

**Saturday 28 March at 8pm**

**Southside Community Centre, Newington, Edinburgh**

**Adult £8/£6 (concession) £5 (kids under 16)**

Come and join the Scottish Wildlife Trust for the Lothians annual ceilidh with the amazing Crowdiehouse Ceilidh Band. The band is a six-piece, fiddle-driven, Scottish ceilidh band of the finest quality, based in Edinburgh but with a distinctly west Highland flavour. Calling is provided for all dances as required. Southside Community Centre is a family friendly spacious dance venue - with a licensed bar provided by the Lothian Conservation Volunteers. Come to enjoy a top quality dance band and help raise money for local wildlife! Tickets at the door or - for the first time this year - available from the Ceilidh Culture festival organisers at [www.ceilidhculture.co.uk](http://www.ceilidhculture.co.uk) or call 0131 221 3390 - the Usher Hall ticket office for Ceilidh Culture.

## Badger Watch

Badger Watch evenings will be held on the following dates: Wednesdays 17 and 24 June and Tuesday 30 June at Corstorphine Hill and Thursday 9 July at Ratho.

Walks at Corstorphine Hill will start promptly at 7.30 from the car park on North Clermiston Road, EH12. The meeting point for the walk at Ratho will be arranged nearer the time.

These events prove very popular, so names will be allocated after the closing date. There will be places for 10 people in each group, priority being given to those who have not been on a watch in the last three years. They are not suitable for children under 10.

If you wish to take part, please return the slip below to Averil by 30th April. A donation of about £5 is suggested towards peanuts for the badgers and Badger Group administration. We are grateful to Trish Alderson of Edinburgh and Lothians Badger Group.

Please reply using the slip below and in the event of having to cancel let Averil - 01506 842676 - know so that your place can be reallocated if the evenings are over-subscribed

## Can farming be compatible with good water quality?

**Thursday 12 March 2009**

A leading food expert, Prof Tim Lang of City University London, has recently stated that the current system of agricultural production, designed in the 1940s, is incurring 'astronomic' environmental costs. In Scotland those costs appear in the form of eutrophication (nutrient enrichment), habitat degradation, or even temporary toxicity in our lochs, rivers and streams. Downstream bathing beaches may be contaminated by livestock originated faecal organisms washed off farm steadings or grazing paddocks. Faced with rising food demand and downward price pressures, de-intensification may not be an option. This talk will look at some of the pollution sources and practical mitigation measures that farms can use to meet the stringent EU water quality standards being phased in over the next few years. The answer to the question above is: not always at present, but in future it has to be.

*Bill Jeffrey is an environmental engineering consultant with SAC.*

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

## Badger Watch

Name: (please print)

Tel:

Address:

Email:

Please reserve \_\_\_\_ place/s on:

Date:

Date:

Please send to Averil Stewart 29 Highfield Crescent Linlithgow EH49 7BG by **30th April**.

# Planning Matters - Spring 2009

## Midlothian

A planning application has been submitted for a 250 bed hotel, country club and a 'village' adjacent to the north end of our SWT Nature Reserve and Wildlife Site at Erraid Wood. The following comments and recommendations relate to the development's impact on Biodiversity were made by SWT to the Midlothian Planning Department and we thought it might be interesting for members to see the detail:

1. It is noted on the plans provided that the development includes areas of woodland and scattered trees. SWT recommends that these areas should as much as possible be comprised of the existing native woodland and trees to benefit Biodiversity. The larger the area of this type of habitat that is left intact the larger the benefit for Biodiversity.
2. Should planting of additional woodland and trees be required this should be comprised of woody species native to the Pentland Hills. Native Woodland is a scarce habitat that supports a wider range of biodiversity compared to woodland comprised of non-native trees.
3. As far as possible continuous strips of woodland should be retained or created to enable wildlife to move freely through the site.
4. In addition other features beneficial to wildlife should be either retained or created on the site. Some examples of these are native flower-rich meadows, dead wood, wetland areas and open water. The Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) published by Midlothian Council in 2006 includes a section on New Developments that should be consulted by the developer.
5. A strip of existing woodland should be retained along the southern edge of the development area to protect Erraid Wood SWT Wildlife Reserve from the negative impacts of this development eg. light pollution.
6. A Badger Survey of the development site must be undertaken, by a qualified surveyor, before any work is undertaken to ensure no disturbance or damage is caused to Badger Setts that may be present on site. Badgers are protected by the provisions of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
7. A Bat Survey by a qualified and licensed Bat Surveyor must be undertaken of the building before demolition. Bats are European protected species. It is therefore a crime to kill, injure, capture or disturb them. Scottish Natural Heritage must be contacted for further advice and guidance on the law relating to Bats.
8. Any felling of trees or scrub must be undertaken out with the Bird Breeding Season to avoid disturbing and damaging nests and eggs of breeding birds. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 should be consulted for the law relating to the protection of Wild Birds their nests and eggs.

Other issues concerning the siting of the proposed development at Hillend in the Green Belt and in an Area of Great Landscape Value and in a designated Regional park are being pursued by others such as the Friends of the Pentlands. The Midlothian Planning Department has also announced its intention to adopt the Midlothian 2008 Local Plan (as amended by a recent Local Inquiry) which explicitly protects Wildlife Sites such as the above Nature Reserve in its policies.

*Tim Duffy*

*Lothians Members Centre Planning Secretary*

*Flat 4F2, 34 Warrender Park Terrace,*

*Edinburgh, EH9 1ED*

*Tel/Ans/ Fax 0131 2288785*

## East Lothian

The East Lothian Local Plan 2008 clearly shows local Wildlife Site boundaries as does the City of Edinburgh and Midlothian up to date Local Plans.

## West Lothian

This council has also notified us of its intention to adopt the (long awaited and now rather out-of-date regarding local Wildlife Sites in that authority's area) West Lothian Local Plan in January 2009.

Planning permission for a Wind farm at Pates Hill has been granted and we shall keep a close eye on developments there and elsewhere where windfarms are proposed. It is possible to run windfarms avoiding significant damage to wildlife but new issues such as their effect on bat populations need watching closely.

All the above Local Plans in future will have to take into account the new proposed second version of the National Planning Framework for Scotland. This framework has taken on board much advice from SWT including the idea of 'national ecological networks' of which local Wildlife Sites (new name: Local Biodiversity Sites) form a core strategic part.

## City of Edinburgh

We have been notified by eagle-eyed locals that Cala Ventures Limited have applied for planning permission for 28 houses and 3 villas on part of the old Scottish Agricultural College site facing Maybury Road – which in original planning permission landscaping plans was to be a 'significant area of buffer planting and open space'. This appears to be doubling the built footprint of the original development – will the council allow such a blatant follow-on destruction of remaining greenspace and potential biodiversity habitat?

**Visit West Lothian Reserves - Saturday 23 May 2009**

The tour will start at 10.00 at Hermand Birch Wood. (Grid ref OS Sheet 65 NT031618, 3 km from West Calder.) This is small reserve but with diverse habitats that provide for a range of species from birch, Scots pine, mosses, orchids and wildflowers.

Our next reserve will be Petershill (NS984698) where two disused reservoirs are set amongst fields. Outcrops of limestone support a rich array of lime-loving mosses and liverworts. It is 2 miles from Bathgate and the tour will begin around 11.30.

At 2.00pm, after a lunch or picnic and comfort stop, the next reserve will be Tailend Moss (NT005678), a raised peat bog supporting plants such as heather, sphagnum moss and cottongrass, teal and dragonflies. It is another area full of surprises.

If you would like help with transport contact Averil Stewart (01506 842676). Please also let her know if you are coming for the whole trip or joining in for part only.

**Don't forget the AGM on 23rd April at 7.30pm - and learn more about West Lothian Reserves afterwards!**

**Brock Wood - Wetland and Woodland**

Brock Wood, formerly known as Spott Wood, NT662748, is 43 acres in size and lies along the Brock burn, which flows from southwest to northeast following the Lammermuir fault and enters the sea at Broxmouth, south of Dunbar. It originally belonged to the Biel and Dirleton Estate and contained a dam built for Dunbar water works. During the flood of August 1948, the spillway was overtopped and undercut and collapsed. By then the 'compensation pond' was no longer required and it was taken out of service by breaching the dam. The Forestry Commission bought the ground and planted it with experimental plots of assorted poplar hybrids in the old burn haughs with the manufacture of matches in mind. Some were felled in the seventies along with hardwoods on the northern slopes. The site was acquired in 1988 by David Jamieson in agreement with the Scottish Wildlife Trust and it was hoped to re-establish an area of open water by modifying the breach in the old dam. This was completed in 2001, but severe flooding and a spate in October 2002 caused the collapse of the dam, since when the aim has been to form pools in the wet areas. Work is ongoing to keep them full of water.

The steep slope to the south of the haugh is semi-natural woodland with old oaks dominating the canopy, whereas the north slopes contain mixed plantation woodland. The haugh to the east of the dam is dominated by alder and to the west there are tall herbs with planted areas of poplar.

Brock wood was formally handed over to SWT in October 2006 and joins Woodhall Dean, Thornton Glen and East Lammermuir Deans as important wildlife sites in East Lothian.

*L. Fairweather, with acknowledgement to information in the SWT site survey, May, 2000, and to David Jamieson, now convenor of Brock Wood.*

**Visit to Brockwood Reserve, East Lothian 9 May 2009**

An opportunity to visit the most recently required reserve in the Lothians. Recently constructed paths lead through woodlands and by wet areas with a variety of bird life and plants. As the reserve, near the village of Spott, is fairly remote, transport will have to be by car arriving at the reserve about 11am. We shall spend about one and a half hours on a guided walk. Thereafter those wishing to do so can enjoy a picnic lunch before returning to Edinburgh. If you would like to join this outing please complete the attached slip and send it to Eric Brown before 15th April 2009.

Those applying will be contacted in April with details of transport arrangements etc. Because of limited parking the number of visitors is limited to about 12 persons so early application is advisable.

To: Eric Brown, 6 West Caiystane Road, Edinburgh, EH10 6RS      Tel: 0131 445 1720

Name/s.....

.....

Address.....

.....

Tel .....

*Please complete and delete as appropriate:*

I/We will require a lift

I/We can offer lifts to ..... persons

## Bawsinch BioDiversity

Our reserve at Bawsinch was acquired by SWT in 19' as a buffer between the city and Duddingston Bird Sanctuary. The Sanctuary was established in 1924 when it was presented to the nation and became part of Holyrood Park. It is now an SSSI.

Development of the waste land which is now our reserve would have had a very negative effect on the biodiversity of the Sanctuary, and our Council decided to buy it for £10,000. The 7 hectares purchased have been used to recreate natural habitats which were in decline elsewhere. The selected habitats were: mixed woodland, scrub, wildflower meadow, freshwater pond and mown grass. Three habitats of importance were already present in the Bird Sanctuary: open water, reed-bed and wet woodland, all of which are now buffered from the city by Bawsinch.

In numerical array, the the list of life-forms is now quite long: fungi, about 80 species; mosses 12; ferns 8; conifers 6; other trees 75; dicotyledonous herbs 246; monocots 93; invertebrates other than insects 152; moths and butterflies 228; flies 177; beetles 79; other insects 75; fish probably 7; amphibians 4; birds about 170, about 40 regularly breeding; mammals 20, the latest addition being roebuck.

This totals up to 1434 species of life, and of course there are many more to be recorded, and to arrive as the climate changes. A lung for Edinburgh, and a deep well of diversity within the city.

*Colin McLean*

**Bawsinch Open Days: Sundays May 10 & June 14 11-4**

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## LMC Website

Technophobes will want to skip this article, but the remainder may be interested to know, or be reminded, that the Lothians Members Centre has its own, fairly simple, web-site for reserves, activities, notices, committee meetings etc.

It can be accessed through the SWT home page. If you click 'about us' you get a drop-down list including 'local Members'. Click that and there's a list of all the homegrown websites including ours. The ones that aren't underlined don't have sites yet.

Alternatively you can go directly to

<http://lothiansmemberscentre.homestead.com/>

(note the *s* on the end of *Lothians* and *members*)

Our site has space for a page or more for each reserve. I've done one for Hermand Birchwood, and if anybody wants some for their reserve, then just send an email to [jim.hewlett@virgin.net](mailto:jim.hewlett@virgin.net) with such pictures and words as you want to have put in. I can tailor the style to your own idea, or imitate the style of a site you like.

There's an activities page, which has a simple calendar of the events over the next year, although it's quite hard to keep up-to-date, the *Lothian Talk*, and a copy of the current Events Card, along with the minutes of LMC meetings. Feedback is invited.

*Jim Hewlett*



## SWT excursion to Johnston Terrace Wildlife Garden

**Saturday 13 June: 1030 - 1200**

Come along to the Trust's smallest and most urban reserve, located on the south side of Edinburgh Castle, for what promises to be a fascinating visit. You will hear some of its history, see how recent grant money has been spent, and learn how to create a range of habitats in a small area – some ideas you may be able to use in your own gardens. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in the gardens after the guided tour.

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## Bat Walk 13 August



Bat Walk at Blackford Pond, Edinburgh on Thursday 13th August 2009 starting at 8.30pm Blackford Pond, below the Royal Observatory, is one of the few places locally where we can guarantee to see more than one species of bat. On previous walks we have always seen pipistrelle and Daubenton's bats. Bat detectors convert the bats ultrasonic echo location calls into audio which we can hear, enabling us to identify different species and to note various behaviour patterns. On the walk we will be able to both see and hear bats. Meet inside the gate to Blackford Pond on Cluny Drive at junction with Oswald Road. A £3.00 donation to Lothian bat Group is optional but appreciated.

### Can Collection

Can you help with a collection at Tesco's, Colinton, on Saturday May 16? Contact Averil on 01506 842676 for details.

### Lothian Talk

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