

Fungi Foray - SWT Bawsinch wildlife reserve – October 2009

Sam Ranscombe, BTCV Natural Talent mycology apprentice at The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, reports on a successful outdoor meet.

We had a wonderful morning foraging for fungi at SWT Bawsinch wildlife reserve on 31 October 2009. The diversity of fungi found highlighted how well this site is managed with unimproved grassland and mixed woodlands with plenty of left standing and fallen dead wood. These are fantastic habitats for fungi and we found and identified twenty species including the beautiful purple wood blewit (*Lepista nuda*) and the black and white candlesnuff fungus (*Xylaria hypoxylon*). We found examples of the three main types of fungi - exchangers, recyclers and parasites - including funnels, inkcaps, earthballs, honnets and brackets. A great foray! Look out for details of next autumn's foray in *Lothian Talk*.

One of our younger readers had a great time foraging ...

It was a warm, sunny Halloween day in Bawsinch nature reserve - a good day for 'fungal foraging'. (Bawsinch is near Duddingston, in Edinburgh). A large group of us, including my mum and dad, went through the woods with the expert Sam (Samantha Ranscombe), and found all sorts of interesting fungi.

I learnt that there were three types of fungus - the recyclers, the exchangers and the parasites. Recyclers break down dead wood & leaf litter. Exchangers form a partnership with trees and other plants, sharing nutrients and support. Parasites, however, live wholly off other plants or animals, sometimes killing them.

One of the more interesting fungi we found was the 'slime mould'. Technically, since it moves (slowly) towards its food, it's an animal. However, it is also a fungus. I found quite a few fungi myself, more than I thought I would. These included the shaggy parasol and the jelly-ear. This, true to its name, looks like an ear and feels like jelly.

Overall it was a very interesting morning out and I would recommend it to anyone who would like to learn a bit more about fungi.

Angus Shaw (age 12), Carllops

Ps Sam told us how to do a spore print and dad and I managed to do a shaggy parasol and two wood blewitts.



Angus with some specimens of jelly ear (*Auricularia auricular-judae*)

Planning Matters - Winter 2009

West Lothian

A new Dobbies garden centre plus other developments are proposed for Uphall, about 60 Ha in total for the development. There are local concerns about bat and barn owl roosts.

In an innovation this quarter, the SWT headquarters officer responsible for planning, Dr Maggie Keenan, has issued the first quarterly national planning newsletter, dealing mostly with wildlife planning issues of national importance but encouraging the reporting of local issues and the support of local members centre planning teams. A planning guidance note was also issued, covering such issues as the latest planning legislation, policy and the new National Planning Framework for Scotland Version 2. Further such guidance will follow.

Tim Duffy, Lothians Members Centre Planning Secretary

Flat 4F2, 34 Warrender Park Terrace, Edinburgh, EH9 1ED Tel/Ans/ Fax 0131 2288785

East Lothian

The inaugural council-led meeting of a new Local Biodiversity Site committee for East Lothian took place recently, with hopes that there would be such a committee formed in West Lothian in 2010. This would mean that each of the four councils of the Lothians would finally have its own formal Local Nature Conservation System being developed.



Lothian Talk

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

Lothians Members Centre Newsletter
Spring 2010

Lothian Members Centre AGM and Quiz

Thursday 22nd April at 7.30pm: 33 Melville Street Edinburgh

Something different for our AGM this year:

So you think you know your wildlife?

Following the usual business part of the meeting we will be having a light-hearted wildlife quiz. We ask *you* to lend photographs or objects of wildlife interest which will form part of the questioning. If you can contribute something, please get in touch with Averil Stewart (Tel: 01506 842676 Email: gaveril.stewart@virgin.net).

Do come along and join in!

Note: The AGM and Quiz is on Thursday 22nd April and not 23rd April as printed in the current Events Card.

A Ceilidh Date for you with the Crowdie House Ceilidh Band

Saturday 27 March at 8pm - midnight

**Southside Community Centre, Newington, EH8 9ER
Adult £8/£6 (concession) £5 (kids under 16)**

Once again we are holding the annual SWT Lothians ceilidh at the spacious and family-friendly dance venue of South Side Community Centre on Saturday 27th March 2010. With the excellent *Crowdie House Ceilidh Band*, the calling of dances when required and good value bar run by the Lothians Conservation Volunteers, this is *your* annual ceilidh. Please come along, have a good dance and help raise money for wildlife in the Lothians. Put it in your diary today!

New Website for Lothians Members Centre

The Lothians Members Centre website has been updated and relaunched with a new web address: www.swtlothians.org.uk. Designed by local committee member, Barry O'Kane, the new website offers up-to-date information concerning events organised by Lothians Members Centre, downloads of current and archived editions of *Lothian Talk*, details of SWT reserves within the Lothians area and links to other websites of interest to our members, including the Edinburgh Natural History Society website. If you haven't visited our website lately, do have a look - and let us know what you think.

The *Scottish Wildlife Trust* is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (registered number SC040247) having its registered office at *Scottish Wildlife Trust, Cramond House 3 Kirk Cramond Edinburgh, EH4 6HZ*. It is also a Scottish registered charity (charity number SC005792).

Last Minute Reminder:

Thursday 11 March 2010 7.30pm

The Private Lives of Moths

Lecture by John Harrison, Warden of Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve, at 33 Melville Street Edinburgh. Admission is free but donations are appreciated. Non members welcome.

Can collection - at a supermarket near you!

By the time you read this, since January there will have been four days of collecting at Morrison, Hunter's Tryst; at ASDA Chesser; and a weekend at Tesco Bathgate.

The Lothians Members Centre Committee would like to extend a great big Thank You to all volunteers who helped out on any of those occasions.

Future dates and locations are:

30 March (Tuesday): Sainsburys, Blackhall

17 April: Morrisons, Pilton Drive

11/12 June: Tesco, Broughton Road

10 July: Sainsburys, Murrayfield

If you would like to help please contact Averil Stewart:

Email gaveril.stewart@virgin.net or Telephone 01506 842676.

It is really worthwhile and can be quite fun. Over £638 was taken at Tesco Queensferry in October by volunteers, working in pairs, doing 2 hours each. Why not join us?

Lothian Talk

Feedback and contributions to:

lothiantalk@qab.org.uk

Forthcoming Outings

Saturday 27th March: Musselburgh Lagoons

Our regular outing to this waterfowl-rich location, led by Nick Aitken. Meet at 10.30am at Goose Green, end of Balcarres Road, near the river mouth (OS Landranger66: NT 347734).

Saturday 17th April: Aberlady Bay

Another Lothians SWT favourite, led by John Harrison. Meet at 10.30am at Aberlady Reserve Car Park (OS Landranger66: NT 472804).

Saturday 8th May

Visit to Luggiebank Wood Reserve, Cumbernauld

Part of the Cumbernauld Greenspaces, Luggiebank Woodland is a strip of semi-natural ancient woodland running along the banks of the Luggie Water. It is noted for the rich array of wildflowers some of which should be at their best during May. It also provides a variety of habitats for birds and insects. There is a path through the Reserve providing a reasonably even walking surface, narrowing in places. There are stretches which may be muddy and there are some short steeper sections.

We will be meeting at the Park-and-Ride carpark for Greenfaulds Station at 10.30am. One of the local SWT staff will be there to guide us through the Reserve. The walk will take about 2 hours. You might like to bring a picnic and even go on to visit Cumbernauld Glen by Cumbernauld House.

Directions to get to the reserve can be found on the SWT website under Luggiebank Wood Reserve. The reserve is on OS Landranger Map 64 at **NS758730**. If you would like a lift or can offer a lift to another please contact Averil Stewart on 01506 842676 or Jill Neufeld 0131 441 5446.

Badger Watches

Badger Watch evenings will be held on the following dates: *Monday 14th June, Thursday 24th June, Tuesday 6th July, Wednesday 21st July* at Corstorphine Hill in Edinburgh.

Walks will start promptly at 7.30 from the car park on North Clermiston Road, EH12 (OS Landranger 66: NT203739).

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 for organising these events.

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

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**.

Open Day at Bawsinch

Bawsinch Open Days will be held this year on the first and last Sundays of Wildlife Week from 11am until 4pm. Enter by wicket gate, Duddingston Road West by bend in road, opposite parking bays (OS Landranger 66: NT285725).

Bat Walk 12 August

Bat Walk at Blackford Pond, Edinburgh on Thursday 12th August 2010 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 Gardens at the junction with Oswald Road.

A £3.00 donation to Lothian Bat Group is optional but appreciated.

Reserve Profile: Hermand Birchwood

Hermand Birchwood is a delightful ten-hectare mosaic of habitats comprising marsh, meadow, heathland, beech wood, mixed woodland and, of course, lots of birch, sited upon a raised peat bog, once a common feature throughout lowland Scotland. The reserve has a chequered history: drainage of the moorland in the late eighteenth century, coal mining in the late nineteenth century and peat digging and tree felling during the two World Wars. It became a Scottish Wildlife Reserve in 1984 and was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest by the Nature Conservancy Council in 1987.

The Birchwood itself has developed from natural regeneration. Wartime felling and more recent clearings have created good diversity of young and old trees, which means a wide range of wildlife habitats. The mixed woodland contains some of the oldest trees on the reserve; the mature beech trees are over 130 years old and the Scots pines about eighty. Other trees include oak, alder, wild cherry and the unusual hornbeam, easily mistaken for beech. This diversity of habitat hosts a wide variety of birds including redstart, tree pipit, tawny and long-eared owls, treecreeper, long-tailed tit, sparrowhawk and woodcock. Look out for holes in old trees made by the great spotted woodpecker.

Hermand Birchwood forms part of a network of wildlife corridors that stretch throughout the local area. A visit in winter after heavy snow will enable you to follow the tracks of mammals both using the wood and passing through. Look out for stoat, weasel and roe deer as well as rabbits, hares and small rodents. In spring the woodland floor is covered by broad buckler fern and a visit is rewarded by a medley of birdsong as the nesting season gets underway. There are large areas of blaeberry, especially under the mature Scots pine, giving a highland feel to parts of the walk. Later in the season its berries can provide a feast for human and animal alike: look out for purple droppings as many animals enjoy this abundance.

Further in, the open area of heathland is covered with heather, most glorious in late summer. As the seasons progress, the autumn colours of the trees are rewarding. Sphagnum moss is found particularly in the marshy area between meadow and woodland. Here two ponds have been dug by volunteers to encourage amphibians. The grassland is carefully managed to maintain high species diversity including devilsbit scabious, ragged robin, adders tongue fern and greater butterfly orchid. In 1987 a shelterbelt of mixed native deciduous trees such as alder, oak, birch, rowan, gean and willow was planted in the grassland to the west of the reserve.

Hermand is based on peat and as a result can be susceptible to fire, which when started can survive underground, then rise up and burn again some distance from its original site. Fortunately most of the time this is not a concern, but in dry weather extreme caution must be exercised; the heath is managed to keep the water table high by reducing drainage and restricting tree growth by removing seedlings.

A visit at any time of year will be well rewarded; the only recommendation is waterproof footwear in most seasons.

Jim Hewlett

Hermand Birchwood is situated one mile south of West Calder, just west of the B7008 Harburn Road (OS Landranger 65: NT 031619). There is a location map on the Lothians Members Centre website.

Forthcoming Outings ... continued

Wild Food Picnic: Newbyres Castle Community Garden and Gore Glen, Gorebridge.

Saturday June 5 at 2pm (*note not as printed in annual Events Card*)

The woodlands and old railway lines along the Gore Glen provide a foraging ground for a range of seasonal wild products from salads to staples. As nature smothers the evidence of an industrial park some interesting and tasty delights have begun to establish themselves. Ian Edwards will provide tips on safe and sustainable harvesting and invite participants to sample some new flavours fresh from the countryside.

Bring a small edible contribution from your kitchen if you want to stay for a bring-and-share picnic after the foray. Families are welcome.

Ian can only accommodate a maximum of about 20 people so please reserve your place by returning the slip below.

Wild Food Picnic

Name: (please print)

Tel:

Address:

Email:

Please reserve ____ place/s on the Wild Food Picnic on Saturday 5th June

Please send to Quintin Blane 18D Kirkhill Road Penicuik EH26 8HZ by **Monday 31st May**.