

Nights for Bats...

Thirty people met near Blackford Pond at 8.30 pm on a bright, dry, windless August evening for our annual bat walk. It was encouraging to see so many children – the hope must be that such events will help to stimulate an interest in wildlife in the younger generation to carry into later life.

Conditions were near perfect for the main prey species of the bats, as much flailing of arms and copious applications of Avon Skin So Soft soon testified! Our guide for the evening was Stuart Smith from the Lothian Bat Group, who described for us the life-cycle and ecology of bats. We discovered that bats can be surprisingly long lived - up to 12 years - and that some species eat fish or birds, though our bats are exclusively insectivorous. A single bat can consume up to 3000 midges in one night, which is surely something we can all appreciate.

With dusk falling we set off on a short walk through the trees and around the pond, and were soon rewarded with our first sighting of bats flying just above our heads. Lothian Bat Group had provided bat detectors, and using these we were able to identify the bats as soprano pipistrelles. As we moved closer to the pond edge we also saw Daubenton's bats feeding low over the surface of the water. At least one common pipistrelle was also identified using the detectors.

The evening gave us a fascinating insight into the lives of these amazing creatures and our thanks go Stuart and other members of the Bat Group for leading the walk.

Colin Shepherd

...and Badgers

Four successful Badger Watches this summer at Corstorphine and Ratho led by Trish Alderson from Edinburgh and Lothians Badger Group brought variety and in each case the good fortune of a badger sighting, though a revisit was required for the Ratho visit: for one participant the fulfillment of a lifetime: "It was a mesmerising hour!"

Donations, giving total of £140, have been much appreciated by ELBG, and most has gone to printing a new ELBG display. The badger population on Corstorphine Hill is recovering from loss of foraging caused by housing development at Craigcrook, so we can look forward to watching here again in 2010. Places in 2010 will be drawn from a hat after priority has been given to those who have applied previously and been unsuccessful. So don't give up hope.

Finally: sightings of badgers, dead or alive, would be most gratefully received through the Scottish Badgers web site. Email: email@elbg.fsnet.co.uk or visit Scottishbadgers.org.uk to report badger deaths anywhere in Scotland.

Averil Stewart

Photo:
Trish
Alderson



During the summer, Edinburgh Wildlife Watch Group had the chance to go badger watching. *Phoebe Edwards*, a Wildlife Watch member, tells us all about it...

I was very excited to visit a badger hide as I had never seen a badger before. I was guided up a small hill with my mum and sister by the owner of the hide. We settled down in a small shed with a large window, looking out into the woodland before us. Peanuts had been scattered over the mossy ground and over a large fallen branch.

Soon, a small black nose poked out from the nettle bushes surrounding the clearing. I leaned forward excitedly to get a better look at the comical creature that was now snuffling the ground with its shiny black nose. Two more badgers appeared, their grey furry bodies swaying as they waddled forward. They all sucked up the peanuts like hoovers, one of them bravely climbing the fallen branch to reach its prize. At one point there were six badgers, all scurrying around looking for more peanuts. An envious squirrel watched from above, but made no move to come down from its perch on a branch. After some time, when we had had our fill of badger watching, it started to rain and thunder tore through the sky. The startled badgers ran for cover and dived back into the nettles. We abandoned the hide and headed back down the hill. It had been great fun.

Lothian Talk

<http://lothiansmemberscentre.homestead.com>



Lothians Members Centre Newsletter of the Scottish Wildlife Trust Autumn 2009

Nature's Wild Harvest Thursday 10 December 2009

In the past ordinary folk would have known dozens of different uses for our native plants. Today there is a resurgence of interest from crafts people, herbalists, foragers and even industry in old and new uses for common wild plants. Gathered with care to conserve supplies, these wild harvests can be seen as a sustainable resource that can give pleasure and raises awareness and appreciation for nature.



The Royal Botanic Garden's Wych Elm Project and Reforesting Scotland's Forest Harvest Project provide the inspiration and examples for Dr Ian Edwards talk on Nature's Wild Harvest. He will include samples from Britain and beyond including some tasters with a seasonal theme.

Dr Ian Edwards is Head of Exhibitions and Events, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

There will be seasonal refreshments at the interval of this lecture

Lothian Members' Centre AGM

Please Note: The Lothian Members' Centre AGM for this season will be on Thursday 22nd April and not 23rd April as printed in the current Events Card.

Eye of Newt and Toe of Frog – Amphibian and Reptile Magic Thursday 11 February 2010



Everyone is familiar with at least one of our native amphibians and reptiles but most of these interesting animals are rather secretive and elusive.

This illustrated talk will identify the British and Scottish species, see where and how they might be found and consider the Lothian picture, with reference to some SWT reserves.

It will also illustrate the work of the Lothian Amphibian and Reptile Group and see how commercial developments contribute to our knowledge of amphibian and reptile distribution.

There will be a competitive conclusion requiring pencil and paper.

Peter Leach is Chairman of the Lothian Amphibian & Reptile Group

The Private Lives of Moths Thursday 11 March 2010

If you think that moths are little brown things that you sometimes find lurking in your kitchen then this is the talk for you! The variety of moth life out there is amazing. From bright red ones to big green ones, you can see a great variety just in your own back garden. Even their names are great: Map-winged Swift; Maiden's Blush; Setaceous Hebrew Character. Come and find out about their secret lives, from where they go, what they eat and just what is a moth anyway?

John Harrison is Warden of Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve

Remember...

Thursday 12 November 2009

**Celebrating and protecting
Scotland's Seas
Calum Duncan**

Full details in the Summer edition of Lothian Talk

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

Hey, Wildlife Watchers...

... be sure to read Phoebe Edwards', one of our Wildlife Watch members, exciting description of a meeting with badgers on the back page of this edition of *Lothian Talk*.

We would love to hear *your* wildlife watching stories. Tell us about your Winter Wild Watches in Edinburgh & the Lothians – email us at Edinburgh.WildlifeWatch@hotmail.co.uk and your story could be published in the next newsletter!

Planning Matters - Summer 2009

City of Edinburgh

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is being produced for a proposed Millerhill waste management complex adjacent and to the west of the old Millerhill rail marshalling yards. We are not aware of any special wildlife records for the site but let us know if you do.

An update on the very long running progress with City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) Local Plan development might be useful here. There is an ongoing alteration to the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan (RWELP) which will be changed to include the West Edinburgh Planning Framework (WEPF) – however the latter is currently held up by a necessary traffic appraisal. The WEPF should go to Planning Committee in December and for public comment up to mid-March. Work will start in 2010-2011 for the long planned 'Unitary plan' for CEC; that is, where the RWELP and the City centre Local Plan are combined into one single CEC-wide plan. This unitary plan will replace the now obsolete local natural heritage site designation names 'Wildlife Site' (WS) and Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC, used in the RWELP) with the new name 'Local Biodiversity Site' (and 'Local Geodiversity Site').

Midlothian

A locally very controversial open cast coal mine application has recently been lodged for Airfeld just south of Cousland. Whilst it may be impact-isolated from our Hadfast Valley Nature Reserve (and SSSI) approximately 300m metres away to the north-east, the site is surrounded by Wildlife Sites protected by local plan development policies in the (statutory) Midlothian Local Plan (a fact wilfully or ignorantly 'not focussed on' in the accompanying EIA document which is thus not a good one). One site in particular, the River Tyne Listed Wildlife Site, is just touched by the development boundary and is likely to be at grave risk of pollution as the EIA admits: "an increase in sediment loading of watercourses: an increase in particles carried within the water, thereby potentially adversely affecting freshwater species and causing extremes in flow rates. The settling of particles ('sedimentation') may also affect salmon spawning routes in the Tyne Water". The EIA goes on to suggest mitigation measures to avoid such adverse pollution, but we shall see if these satisfy the relevant licensing authorities such as SEPA (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency).

East Lothian

The Renaissance Golf Club at Dirleton has put in an application for an extension of 3 holes from their existing course onto an adjacent SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) with botanically special sand dunes between Gullane and Archerfield. This is one of the last undeveloped pieces of extensive dune grassland in East Lothian. This is likely to be highly controversial and we and SNH may be objecting after discussions. The cumulative impact of golf course growth on this piece of coast is obvious, and, with so many golf club members being keen on the nature of this piece of coast, one wonders why these further encroachments keep getting proposed.

*Tim Duffy, Lothians Members Centre Planning Secretary
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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).

New Wildlife Watch Group in Edinburgh

Edinburgh's Wildlife Watch Group, the wildlife club for SWT's junior members, is expanding!

At the moment, we meet on the first Saturday of each month and have fun in the outdoors! We go exploring in the woods, looking for minibeasts, having fun with crafts, and we even had a visit from a bat expert.



We've been having so much fun we have decided to form another group in Edinburgh, based in Cramond on the third weekend of the month, to have double the wildlife adventures every month!

We have co-ordinated our groups to run on alternate weekends to the RSPB's new Wildlife Explorers' groups, so now there is a Wildlife club every weekend in the Capital!

Working in tandem with the RSPB means we can promote each others' groups, and have joint events in the future, so hopefully making it easier for the kids of Edinburgh to get involved and inspired by nature!



If you would like to get involved contact Donna Mathieson, SWT People & Wildlife Officer, on dmathieson@swt.org.uk or phone 0131 312 7765.

Random Reflections of a Can Collector

Here we go again...wonder what this session will be like? Can always feels so light and I wonder if I'll ever get anything: but, wait, first coin in... £1...that's a good start. Hard to tell who is about to donate, and who will "walk on by". Sometimes the signals are misleading...fumbling in the bag or pocket always looks promising, but then it might be a hanky or the shopping list that emerges... just keep on smiling, ready to respond with a "thank you" or an explanation of who we are collecting for, or whatever the occasion demands.

There are those who say "Get you on the way back" and usually they really mean it! Others look apologetic, some keep their heads down to avoid eye contact, and there are always a few who look you straight in the eye and walk right past.

It's odd how the mind wanders during quiet spells. I find myself admiring an outfit, appreciating a well-coordinated look, even lusting after a garment, thinking "I never see anything like that when I'm shopping!" On the other hand, sometimes the thoughts are more critical! Better not share those...

You see some lovely family moments, as well as some tantrums – kids always know how to embarrass their families! What I love are the parents, or grandparents, who encourage the littl'uns to put the money in and get their sticker. When the badger joins us, there can be a lot more of that, but it can also scare the wits out of some, even teenagers!

On one occasion all the emergency services appeared: ambulance, police, and fire service. That's the sort of thing that gets you wondering how good a witness you'd be if required, and it is extraordinary how little detail I can recall. I once watched a dog being tied up outside, and thought "I'll just keep an eye on that and see how long it's left"; but despite my best efforts, I totally missed seeing it being taken away.

And then the session is over, and the can has ended up pretty heavy after all. Two hours isn't long to give when you get such a glow of satisfaction raising money for our local reserves. At the moment we can collectors are a very small loyal band, . Why not join us and share the joys of taking? All in a good cause, of course.

Helena Pettie

Letter to the Editor

Rannoch

One of the richest wildlife areas outwith the Lothians is the Black Wood, an ancient Caledonian pinewood on the south shore of Rannoch Loch. These Scots pines are home to a vast number of life-forms, including endangered ones such as wildcat, capercaillie, golden eagle, northern emerald dragonfly and scarlet splash fungus. Surrounding the Black Wood are about 40sq km of Forestry Commission forest, but forest with a difference in that it is largely planted with Scots pine of Rannoch origin, and is thus a future extension of the old wood. The loch itself is home to Arctic charr, a rare species of fish.

Into this complex in the heart of highland Scotland, the owner of Dall House has submitted a planning application to Perth and Kinross Council. He intends to build hotels, 100 houses, 2 golf courses, buildings in the loch, a helicopter pad and seaplane base over 430 hectares. The effect on the whole district would be atomb-bomb-like in character: disturbance, pollution and sewage on a massive scale for a long time and the ecological web smashed for ever. SWT Council is aware of these proposals and will strongly oppose them, but individual letters to Perth and Kinross Council will all help to save this precious wildland from vandalism.

Colin McLean, Edinburgh

The address of the relevant planning authority is: Perth & Kinross Council, 2 High Street, Perth PH1 5PH

Lothian Talk is happy to publish letters, articles and feedback on items featured here. Contributions to:

lothiantalk@qab.org.uk or Q Blane, 18D Kirkhill Road, Penicuik, EH26 8HZ

New East Lothian Membership Secretary

Liz Gray has taken over as the new East Lothian Membership Secretary. Liz has been involved with SWT since the early days of Roslin Glen as an SWT Reserve, when she lived nearby and found it a haven of peace and tranquillity and enjoyed its trees, its beauty and its wildlife. Having moved to West Barns, Dunbar, she now enjoys the same rewards from Brock Wood.

Liz's telephone number is 01368 865660.

Linlithgow Can Collection

The can collection in Tesco, Linlithgow, on 4th July raised a total of £454.42. Many thanks to the volunteers for their enthusiastic efforts.

Volunteers are always welcome to assist in can collections held from time to time in supermarkets around the Lothians. Please get in touch with Averil Stewart 01506 842676 if you think you might be able to help.