

## Outdoor Events

**Aberlady Bay: Saturday 13 April at 10.30am and 20 July at 9.30am**

Led by John Harrison, the emphasis of the April visit is bird life, while July is mainly a moth-trapping event: please note the earlier time for the July event. Meet at Aberlady Reserve Car Park. (OS Landranger 66: NT 472804).

**Musselburgh Lagoons: Saturday 4 May 10.30am**

Our regular outing to this waterfowl-rich location, led by Nick Aitken. Meet at Goose Green, end of Balcarres Road, near the mouth of the Esk (OS Landranger 66: NT 347734).

**Bawsinch Reserve Open Days Sunday 26 May 11am to 4pm**

Guided walks and entry to the bird hide. Also second Sunday of each month from April to October, 11am to 4pm, Bawsinch will be open to allow public access to the bird hide and to a nature trail around the reserve.

<http://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserve/bawsinch-and-duddingston/>

## Edinburgh Wildlife Watch Group are back!

The Edinburgh Wildlife Watch group has been doing loads of fun stuff since it re-started a few months ago. The group had been held together for several years by a very committed volunteer, and when the time came for her to move on, the group went "on-hold". An appeal was put out for new volunteers to re-start the group, and five people came forward, three of whom work at SWT head office! The group re-launched in October with a Halloween special with the kids donning masks and decorating trees. They met again in November with some weather-based activities and a beaver dam building competition. They finished up the year with a Christmas session, which started off with the kids getting a letter from Santa, and then had them following a wildlife Christmas trail through Holyrood Park and finding some treasure at the end! They also made lots of Christmas crafts, from pine cone decorations to cards decorated with holly!

The group meets on the last Sunday of the month, and have a fun programme planned for 2013 including hares, survival skills and bird spotting. If you would like more information, or to book a place for your child, please contact the leaders on [Edinburgh.wildlifewatch@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Edinburgh.wildlifewatch@hotmail.co.uk)

Donna Mathieson



**Badger Watches - Monday 17 and Thursday 20 June, Tuesday 2 and Wednesday 10 July**

Watches take place at Corstorphine Hill in Edinburgh, starting at 7.30pm. These events are very popular but not suitable for children under 10. Places are limited. If you would like to be considered please send a letter and stamped addressed envelope to *Allen Skinner, 16 Dudley Gardens, Edinburgh EH6 4AT* or email Allen at [allenskinner@hotmail.com](mailto:allenskinner@hotmail.com) before 29 April, stating your preferred date(s) and number of places requested. These will be allocated by draw in May. Full details will be provided for those whose application is successful. For those who attend, a donation of about £5.00 is suggested for Edinburgh and Lothians Badger Group.

**Bat Walk Thursday 8 August 8.45pm Blackford Pond Edinburgh**

Blackford Pond in Edinburgh, 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 with Stuart Smith we have seen pipistrelle and Daubenton's bats. The bat detectors provided convert the bats' ultrasonic echo-location calls into audible sound, enabling us to identify different species. 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. A torch and insect repellent are strongly advised. There is no need to book in advance.

**Red Moss of Balerno Open Day**

**Sunday 19 May 12-5pm**

Guided walks, pond dipping, quizzes and fun for all the family! As in previous years this is in association with the City of Edinburgh's Biodiversity Week which is also this year in support of the 'Year of Natural Scotland 2013'

<http://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserve/red-moss-of-balerno/>



# Lothian Talk

Lothians Members Centre Newsletter  
<http://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/local-member-group/lothian/> Spring 2013

## Evening Events

**Thursday 14 March 2013**

**Alpine Plants of the Breadalbane Hills  
Dr John Holland**

The mountains that form the western part of the Breadalbane range from Ben Lui in the west to Ben Lawers in the east are of national and international importance for their rare arctic-alpine flora. This includes 16 nationally rare red data book species, and 56 nationally scarce species. The area has two National Nature Reserves, five Special Areas of Conservation, and over a dozen Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The rich alpine flora of the area has been recognised by botanists since the 18th Century. The presentation will include slides illustrating the range of mountain plants that are found in the Breadalbane Hills from the mountain summits and high cliff ledges to the grasslands, heaths and flushes on the lower hill slopes. There will also be a few slides of other wildlife that can be seen in the Breadalbane Hills.

**Thursday 18 April 2013**

**AGM and more! Do come!**

As in recent years, the Annual General Meeting will be preceded by brief presentations. We are delighted to announce that one of our own members, Anna Henly, winner of one of the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year Awards in 2012, will share some of her stunning images alongside those of Longridge Moss, West Lothian by Gavin Stewart. Come for a treat and learn more.

**Lectures start at 7.30pm and are held at 33 Melville Street Edinburgh. Admission is free but donations appreciated. Non-members welcome. To arrange disabled access telephone Averil Stewart (01506 842676) in advance**

## Yahoo Group

If you are not already a subscriber to the SWT Lothian Members Yahoo Group, why not sign up? Subscribers receive e-mail reminders for SWT talks and outings, sent approximately one week before each event. If arrangements for an event are changed we notify you by a further e-mail. Membership is free and entails no risk of spam. Simply submit a membership request to the administrator at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/swt-lothian>

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The editor would be pleased to receive reports of interesting wildlife observations from the local area *E-mail:* [jan.brogan@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jan.brogan@tiscali.co.uk) *Tel:* 0131 333 4724

The *Scottish Wildlife Trust* is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (registered number SC040247) having its registered office at *Scottish Wildlife Trust, 110 Commercial Street, Edinburgh, EH4 6NF*. It is also a Scottish registered charity (charity number SC005792).

## Outing to Caerlaverock - Saturday 26 October

As a follow up to Dave Fairlamb's talk on 14 February on "Caerlaverock Wetlands and Beyond", we are planning an outing to Caerlaverock Wetland Centre on Saturday 26 October.

We will leave Edinburgh by coach at 9.30am, to arrive at Caerlaverock about 12.00. After a walk round the reserve, visiting the hides, we will be able to watch the birds being fed at 2pm and enjoy a talk from one of the staff. There is a coffee shop at the reserve for refreshments. We plan to be back in Edinburgh about 6.30pm.

For more information about the Wetland Centre, go to [www.wwt.org.uk/visit/caerlaverock](http://www.wwt.org.uk/visit/caerlaverock)

If you would like to take part, please send a cheque for £15 to cover transport costs to Allen Skinner, 16 Dudley Gardens, Edinburgh EH6 4PT, made out to *Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians* and dated 15 June 2013, along with a stamped addressed envelope. If the trip does not take place, the cheque will be returned to you. The price of entry to the centre varies – please see their website for details.

## Planning Matters - Spring 2013

In the last three months we have been asked to comment on a scoping report on an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on Mount Lothian Wind Farm, near Howgate, and a scoping opinion on the extraction of coal and fireclay at Cauldhall Moor, Penicuik, Midlothian. We have made a request for a better EIA and fuller information on the impact on badgers for the planning application 12/04007/FUL - Craighouse campus and associated greenspaces at Easter Craiglockart in Edinburgh - and have looked at several planning applications across the Lothians that did not require further comment from us, including Kinleith Mill industrial estate, Currie.

For Midlothian and East Lothian planning matters please contact *Susan Manson, Castlesteads, Dalkeith, EH22 2NJ*, in the first instance.

For West Lothian planning matters please contact *Cameron Easton (dr.c.easton@gmail.com) 1 Bellsburn Avenue, Linlithgow; West Lothian, EH49 7LD*, in the first instance.

*Tim Duffy, Lothians Members Centre Planning Secretary*

*Flat 4F2, 34 Warrender Park Terrace, Edinburgh, EH9 1ED Tel/Ans 0131 228 8785*

## Creative Forestry at Carrifran

Seventeen members enjoyed a sunny, autumnal day on 22 September for a visit to Carrifran Community Forest, north-east of Moffat, following up the lecture given to Lothians Members Centre in March by Crinan Alexander of the Wildwood Group.

On the way to the sheepfold viewpoint, we learned how to differentiate alder from hazel solely on leaf characteristics. At the viewpoint, we learned about the tree planting history of the project and why its success is dependent on herbivores such as sheep, roe deer, and goats being excluded from the valley.

Higher up along Firthhope Burn we observed a diverse collection of floral plants (sea campion, wood sage, mountain sorrel, water avens, yarrow and roseroot), all recent invaders from the adjacent screes now happily colonising the gravel alluvium. Nearby was the distinctive viviparous fescue (*Festuca vivipara*) bearing its spiky plantlets. The lunch stop was at Holly Gill, where the importance of waterfalls and small crags was evident, as the trees that grew there were inaccessible to herbivores.

After lunch a few members accompanied Crinan to Firthhope Linn. During the ascent we spotted pale forget-me-not (*Myosotis stolonifera*), the rarest of the four UK species of water forget-me-nots, and Pyrenean scurvy-grass (*Cochlearia pyrenaica* ssp. *Alpina*). In the hanging valley above we looked at the recent high-altitude tree planting of juniper, downy willow, Scots pine, rowan, and holly which, as saplings, are struggling to compete with the ungrazed grass, large-leaved lady's mantle, and woodrush.

We noted a peacock butterfly and later a tortoiseshell at about 700m feeding on devilsbit scabious. At about 740m, just below the summit of Carrifran Gans (757m), we abruptly entered a montane moss-heath community and, at the summit itself, watched small flocks of meadow pipits migrating south.

On behalf of everyone attending, thanks Crinan for a super day - meteorologically, botanically and ecologically. For more details about Carrifran, visit [www.carrifran.org.uk](http://www.carrifran.org.uk)

*Ian Jackson*

## Visit the Alpines at RBGE on Saturday 15 June: Want to book a place?

Following the talk on alpine plants by John Holland in March, a visit to the new alpine facilities at the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh has been arranged for *Saturday 15 June*. The tour lasts one and a half hours starting at 10.30am. Places are limited to 20 so early booking is advised. To reserve a place please send a cheque for £6 made out to *Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians* to Averil Stewart, 29 Highfield Crescent, Linlithgow EH49 7BG with SAE for confirmation of place or for return of cheque if all places are already taken.

The collection of alpines at the Royal Botanic Garden is one of the best in the world. It includes a wide range of plants, from dwarf trees and shrubs to bulbs, succulents and orchids. The Garden's collection comes from mountainous regions all over the world, from Scotland and the permafrost regions of the Arctic to South Africa and New Zealand.

Work on the new Alpine House began in 2011 and is due to be finished in 2013. The new structure will sit next to, and complement, the traditional House by showcasing the latest techniques in the cultivation and care of alpines. Tufa will form a natural rock face for the plants to grow and allow for a wider range of species that are in decline in habitats around the world. Come and marvel at what is on offer on our doorstep!

## News from Lothian Reserves from 2012

While there have been no changes to the extent of our reserves during 2012 one significant event was the re-opening after several years of the main road through *Roslin Glen* following major repairs. The reserve was certainly more peaceful without traffic running through the wood.

The winter proved very dry but the rest of the year from April onward was exceptionally wet. We must remember, however, that high rainfall is not all bad; while butterfly numbers, for example, were markedly down, lots of rain is a good thing for our raised bog reserves at *Longridge Moss*, *Tailend Moss* and *Red Moss* at Balerno. The reedbeds at *Bawsinch* and *Duddingston Loch* also benefit from higher water levels during the summer – helping to keep the marsh wet and slow the invasion of trees. However, changing the climate permanently is somewhat outside our ability and would likely prove unpopular – so let's hope for a better summer in 2013.

Interesting wildlife records were understandably a bit thin on the ground in 2012 but it is pleasing to hear that nuthatch continue to do well and spread in *Roslin Glen*. Crossbill and jay were also first records for *Red Moss* reserve. Common darter dragonflies appear to have a good year and were frequently recorded in *Bawsinch* and were abundant in the reedbed west of *Duddingston Loch*. In addition otter continue to be seen quite regularly in the Loch after their successful breeding early in the year. When volunteers were repairing one of the boundary drystone dykes at *Woodhall Dean* they found an immature great crested newt sheltering in the old section of wall. This is now a very uncommon species. Its breeding pond is a complete mystery as the repaired section of wall is a long way from water.

A severe gale just after the New Year blew down numerous trees over paths and fences which resulted in a lot of work clearing the timber. In addition, considerable time was spent in reserves felling trees identified as diseased and potentially dangerous, particularly where they overhung roads. We secured substantial funding during the year, primarily from WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd), to replace the aging northern section of boardwalk at *Red Moss*. The southern boardwalk was replaced two years ago and the northern boardwalk will now also be wider and allow disabled access. Work on the replacement boardwalk should start early in the New Year and we hope to be able to re-use the sound old boards at other reserves, particularly at *Duddingston Loch* where we have a great need for temporary boardwalks and bridges to get safe access to the marsh areas.

Most of our work in 2012 has been either routine or part of long-term projects. We continued work to remove non-native conifers from *Brock Wood* and *Addiewell* and replace them with native deciduous woodland. We also installed more plastic sheeting dams to reduce drainage at our three raised bog reserves; the dams aren't the prettiest but they can be effective at blocking ditches dug when attempts were made in the past to drain the bogs. Where possible we use grazing as a tool to maintain species-rich grassland, but where this is not possible we have to cut and clear away the cuttings. As we remain unable to get access for cattle to *Linthouse Glen* we have had to undertake bracken control and grassland management by hand, though there is no doubt that a few cows could do a lot more with a lot less effort. One success at *Bawsinch* this year, surprising given the poor summer, is that we managed to get a hay crop from Goose Green. The couple of hundred small hay bales produced are now helping to feed the SWT flying flock over the winter. Removal of invasive non-native species is another task that takes up a lot of time. As an example, in order to get safe access from *Bawsinch* to the marsh areas to the west of *Duddingston Loch*, we have started to remove dense stands of red-osier dogwood, a North American species deliberately introduced to the sanctuary in the 1920s, but which is now spreading ever more widely even into the reedbed areas.

*Ken Knowles*

## New Editor for *Lothian Talk* ... a new Assistant Webmaster

Jan Brogan, who takes over as editor with the next edition of *Lothian Talk*, grew up on a farm in Hampshire and has lived in Scotland for over 20 years. She has been a journalist for many years with an interest in wildlife and the environment. She is a keen landscape photographer, a member of the RSPB and has volunteer experience building footpaths and dry stone walls for the National Trust.

A new volunteer joins Barry O'Kane to assist in the management of the Lothians Members Centre website. Amanda Garden who hails from Lanark is an analyst and programmer by profession and webmaster for the South East Scotland Cancer Network.

## ... and a new Planning Contact

With this issue we welcome Dr Cameron Easton to the SWT Lothian planning team as the initial contact for planning issues in West Lothian. Cameron can be contacted at [dr.c.easton@gmail.com](mailto:dr.c.easton@gmail.com) or Cameron Easton, 1 Bellsburn Avenue, Linlithgow, West Lothian, EH49 7LD