



**Scottish
Wildlife
Trust**

Lothian Talk

Lothians Members Centre Newsletter

<http://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/local-member-group/lothian/>

Boardwalk opens at Red Moss

The annual Red Moss open day on 19 May was timed to be a key event in Edinburgh's Biodiversity Week festival. Before the day began Caroline Sanderson (of the principal funders WREN) opened the new boardwalk and interpretation panels. Kid's quizzes, pond dipping and guided walks ensured 62 members of the public enjoyed themselves and found out more about the reserve. Attendance was higher than last year and very good considering the overcast weather.

Palmate newts, cuckoos, redpolls, siskins and the rare plant, intermediate wintergreen, were highlights of the wildlife seen on the day. Many thanks to WREN for many such landfill tax funded SWT projects in the

Lothians during the past years, this was the final one in the Lothians.



Mixed fortunes at the coastal spring outings

During a spring characterised by cold winds, rain, hail and snow, we were fortunate that our outings to both Aberlady and Musselburgh coincided with two of the better days. Our visit to Aberlady on 13 April felt as though the much-delayed spring weather had finally arrived (though sadly this proved not to be the case).

Fourteen members met up with reserve warden John Harrison and we started by scanning the inner bay. The tide was out so we saw only small numbers of birds but we did pick out redshank, curlew, oystercatcher and shelduck.

As we crossed the bridge, John pointed out a trail of otter footprints in the mud below. He also explained that because of the

unsettled weather very few of the usual migrants had returned to the reserve, though there had been a significant passage of meadow pipits in the preceding days and later on he identified a group of siskins overhead from their calls.

The reserve was much quieter than usual, with very few small birds to be seen, though some folk got good views of goldcrests in the sea-buckthorn bushes. Lunch at Gullane Point, however, turned out to be productive with good views of eider ducks, common scoter, knot, sandwich tern, long-tailed duck and a red-throated diver.

Our visit to Musselburgh on 5 May was dry and sunny, though with a cool breeze. There had been a surge in the numbers of returning

birds and we were rewarded with a superb view of a singing male blackcap as we walked towards the wader scrapes.

We also heard calling willow warblers, chiffchaffs and skylark and saw a buzzard overhead. On the scrapes themselves we saw grey plover, redshank, dunlin and teal. Two curlews and whimbrel conveniently standing next to each other allowed us to carry out a 'compare and contrast' exercise.

On the walk back along the seawall we had good views of velvet scoter on the Forth and turnstones on the shingle below, though sadly the surf scoter seen during the previous few days eluded us.

Colin Shepherd

Getting to know the creepy crawlies



Our session on 28 April was on mini beasts. We went mini beasting and found a couple of centipedes, lots of woodlice, snails and some worms, we also spotted a couple

of bumblebees buzzing past. Back inside the centre we used our imagination to create our own mini beasts from Plasticine and there were some very interesting creations! We went back outside to pretend we were two teams of spiders and made giant spider webs with wool and material, then we tested the other teams' webs by throwing balls at them to see how many got through and how many the webs managed to catch.

Donna Mathieson

Our next session

25 August 2013

Explore Arthur's Seat

How many different flowers, plants and trees can you identify? What wildlife lives in the scrub, grassland and rocky outcrops?

The sessions run from 10am-12 and booking is essential. The group usually meets at Holyrood Park Education Centre.

Email: edinburgh.wildlifewatch@hotmail.co.uk

Planning matters - summer 2013

This summer four important national and local planning documents arrived for consultation. First, the National Planning Framework 3 Main Issues report was published for consultation at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/NPF3-SPP-Review>. We need to make sure no national developments are planned that affect wildlife seriously in the Lothians. If any are in the plan they will be outside the normal planning system.

Second, the entire Scottish Planning Policy is up for review. This can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/NPF3-SPP-Review/SPP-Review>.

More locally, the draft *Edinburgh Local Development Plan*, in its new shortened form, was published for consultation. Its Local Biodiversity Site protection policies and boundary lists look suitable.

Finally, the *Midlothian Local Development Plan Main Issues Report and Monitoring Statement and Environmental Report* are published for consultation.

In Midlothian, SWT's planning team commented on the Mount

Lothian Wind Farm application as it is of national importance with two nearby mosses due to be restored. The representation letter stated:

Re: 13/00063/DPP| Erection of nine wind turbines and associated infrastructure, Mount Lothian Moss Penicuik. The SWT makes the following comments.

"We note the model estimates a collision risk for pink footed goose at 0.285 birds per year.

This site is extremely important for great crested newts and the Trust would like to see that mitigation during construction would include the following: newt capture under license in areas where they are at risk, exclusion of newts from operational areas, temporary cordoning off of breeding ponds and instillation of 'newt tunnels'.

During the operation phase the Trust would like to see the newt tunnels maintained and extensive areas of habitat restored and created on site as detailed in section 4.1 of the habitat management plan. This should include both pond restoration and semi-natural and marshy grassland. Any restoration work should seek to increase the

connectivity for newts across the site. Regarding monitoring the newt population, any population data collected should be examined by an external review group. There must be a commitment to take action as required if there is any significant decrease in population.

The Trust notes the proposed mitigation of habitat enhancement and restoration of Peeswit Moss and Toxside Moss North and strongly recommends the Scottish Wildlife Trust restoration plan for the sites is adopted. It is essential that post restoration monitoring is undertaken and a suitable indicator of what constitutes successful restoration is determined before the onset of the project.

The SWT would like to be kept informed of the application."

Planning contacts

For Midlothian and East Lothian planning matters contact Susan Manson mansons@castlesteads.net, or at Castlesteads, Dalkeith, EH22 2NJ. For West Lothian contact Dr Cameron Easton dr.c.easton@gmail.com or at 1 Bellsburn Avenue, Linlithgow, West Lothian, EH49 7LD.

Tim Duffy

Save the dates for the winter talks

As we go to press summer feels like it hasn't yet arrived but we didn't want to miss the opportunity to let you know about two of the talks we have lined up to begin our winter programme. We have some super evenings arranged for you this winter, and, hopefully, there's something for everyone.

Thursday 10 October 2013

Fur and feathers: following the DNA breadcrumbs to help solve wildlife crimes. Dr Lucy Webster

Dr Lucy Webster (Wildlife DNA Forensics – Diagnostics & Molecular Biology Section, Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA)) tells us how crimes against wildlife cover a broad range of criminal activity, from illegal trade in endangered species to the cruel treatment of more common species such as badgers.

As with human crime, forensic analysis of items recovered in trade or from crime scenes can provide investigators with the crucial evidence they require to solve cases and bring prosecutions against those responsible. The Wildlife DNA Forensic unit was established in 2011 to analyse non-human DNA evidence recovered during wildlife crime investigations. This presentation will outline the techniques that are being applied in the unit, along with examples from real casework to illustrate the answers to investigative conundrums that can be found from fur and feathers.

Thursday 14 November 2013

Developing ecological surveying skills – and the mosses we encountered. Sara McBride

I am often asked where my passion for mosses and liverworts began, the honest truth is that I don't know. Every new species I came across seemed more fascinating than the last and their diversity and subtle beauty never failed to enthral me. Their ancient-ness and adaptability added to my enthusiasm.

It was this enthusiasm, not only for mosses but for all Scotland's wildlife, that helped me secure a place on the Scottish Wildlife Trust's flagship 'Developing Ecological Surveying Skills' traineeship.

This talk will take you on the exciting journey travelled by myself and my fellow trainees as we visited some of the most spectacular places in Scotland. From some of the country's top experts we learned about the ecology of Scotland and made many exciting discoveries. This talk will share with you the highlights and, of course, the mosses and liverworts that we encountered along the way.

Final outings for 2013

8 August - Bat Walk

8.45pm-10pm

Blackford Pond, Edinburgh

Blackford Pond in Edinburgh 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 pipistrelles and Daubenton's bats. Meet inside the gate to Blackford Pond on Cluny Gardens at the junction with Oswald Road. A £3 donation to the Lothian Bat Group is optional, but appreciated. A torch and insect repellent is strongly advised. There is no need to book in advance.

31 August -

Musselburgh lagoons

10.30am-12.30am

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)

12 October - Aberlady

3pm-6pm

This event will be a walk and to count geese flying in at Aberlady Bay. Meet at Aberlady Reserve Car Park. (OS Landranger 66: NT 472804)

26 October -

Caerlaverock Wetland

Bus Trip, 9.30am – 6.30pm

As we went to press there were a few spaces still available on this trip, if you would like to be put on a reserve list please contact Allen Skinner on 0131 554 6762 or email: allenskinner@hotmail.com Cost £15.

Lectures are held at 33 Melville Street, Edinburgh. Admission is free but donations are appreciated. Non-members welcome. Disabled access available by prior arrangement, please contact Averil Stewart 01506 842676.

Join Yahoo for updates

Do you lose track of what's on? Then sign up to the Lothians members Yahoo group and you'll get email reminders for our outings and talks and if arrangements change you'll also be notified easily. It's free, too. To sign up go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/swt-lothian> and click on 'Join this group'.

You can also get up to the minute news and information on our website as well as the latest issue of Lothian Talk. Why don't you save the webpage as a favourite and give you paper copy to a friend? <http://swtlothians.org.uk>

New access for Bawsinch Reserve

Holders of keys to Bawsinch have, until now, been restricted to the bird hide only. It has been decided to change this and allow keyholders access to the paths around part of the reserve – specifically to the flower meadow and Goose Green to the south of the hide - and also around Colin's Wood beyond.

Details are shown on a map fixed to the back of the hide door. Please note it may sometimes be necessary during the bird breeding season to restrict access further so do check for any notices in the hide when visiting. We hope this will increase the enjoyment of your visits to the reserve.

Should you wish to obtain keys please contact Ken Knowles on 0131 539 6643 for details.

Oak trees planted at Addiewell Bing



Planting oak trees: Last March at Addiewell Bing, near West Calder, Lothians Conservation Volunteers planted more than 150 trees oak trees and protected them in wire netting cages.

Can you help shake a can?

Our can collections are a vital source of funds that help with the management of the reserves in the Lothians. They also help support our winter lecture programme. Our next collections are on:

- Tuesday and Wednesday 10/11 September, Sainsbury's, Straiton.
- Wednesday 16 October at Tesco, Colinton.

If you can help please contact Averil Stewart on 01506 842676 or gaveril.stewart@virgin.net

What have you seen?

Out and about? Seen something unusual? Let us know what you've spotted on the reserves this year. And don't forget to take your camera on your outings as Lothian Talk would love to see your pictures, too.

The deadline for the next issue is 1 September 2013.

Please send your stories to: editor@swtlothians.org.uk (tel 07734 081657).