

Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians Group Newsletter

<http://swtlothians.org.uk>

SWT 50th anniversary sponsored bike ride – rides on!

Your Chairman, Tim Duffy (myself) and, until recently the Trust's Finance Director Paul Ritchie, set off on a sponsored bike ride for SWT between all of the Trust's 120 Nature Reserves on 17/18 May 2014. The first leg took in the 20 reserves of the Lothians. Details of the route taken are on the News page of our Lothians Group website www.swtlothians.org.uk. By the time you read this we will have recently completed the next leg - from Largiebaan SWT reserve on the Mull of Kintyre to the island of Handa!



Watch out in Summer 2015 for the final legs along the east coast between Orkney and the Borders – in fact we intend to finish from Cumbernauld to Edinburgh and some of you have asked to join us on that final shorter leg - perhaps Jupiter Urban Wildlife Reserve to Bawsinch? - approx. 33 miles on the bank holiday weekend of 21 September (see the SWT Lothians website nearer the time). If you have not done so already please consider visiting our Justgiving.com page and sponsor us to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Trust and to help its core unrestricted investment portfolio to ensure the SWT continues for another 50 years! The short link to the JustGiving page is <http://bit.ly/SWT50th>.

Tim Duffy

Chairman's Notes

We start 2015 with a new name as a local members group, we are now called Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians Group (on recent request of the SWT council, all 20+ members centres across Scotland were renamed as '[area covered] Group'). We also welcome enthusiastic new volunteer talent in the form of Declan Duffy (no relation!) as the new Lothian Talk editor and Peter Bain as the new membership secretary, following the retiral after many years effort of Jan Brogan and Jill Newfield respectively. We thank them most sincerely for their commitment to helping run this Local Group which has a much bigger membership (5500+) than any other.

Tim Duffy

Plans to expand fundraising into East and Midlothian

Can collections are a vital part of raising money for the management of our local wildlife reserves in the Lothians, sponsoring the events programme and giving about £1000 to SWT HQ each year. Between 10-12 days are planned and so far these have been mainly in Edinburgh. With more volunteers we could possibly expand into Haddington, Dalkeith and North Berwick. If you live within easy travel distance of this part of Lothians would you please consider volunteering for a 2-hour stint if retail outlets can be identified?

Come and join the small but committed band by contacting Averil on gaveril.stewart@virgin.net or call 01506 842676.

The three latest collections brought in just under £900 at ASDA, Straiton, Tesco, Meadow Place Road and Sainsbury's Linlithgow.

Planning Matters Spring 2014

East Lothian

The council has run a series of workshops in the autumn which introduced the East Lothian Council's Main Issues Report – the MIR which leads to the new Midlothian Development Plan. We attended one and, in a remarkably amicable evening, planners and members of the public discussed the key issues facing East Lothian over the next 10 years. Housing and space for housing is a key issue with spaces for 10,000 houses to be found. The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) was the main item relating to wildlife and biodiversity and will be the main vehicle for delivering biodiversity commitments. One of the planners said there is a commitment to (finish) reviewing all the biodiversity and wildlife sites and rename them as Local Biodiversity Sites. There is also a commitment to designate a large broad habitat encompassing new site in the Lammermuir Hills area. This much we already know from previous discussions with East Lothian. Also a suggestion to create a Local Nature Reserve on part of the lagoon site at Musselburgh. Anyone with comments can respond directly to East Lothian Council by 8th February or forward to Susan Manson below.

City of Edinburgh

We have made representations on the second and final version of the new City wide Local Plan concentrating on links to the Edinburgh Living Landscape initiative SWT is running for the Council. Local Biodiversity Sites are well defined and protected in the new plan and we are regularly increasing the number of new assessed sites on this Council's LBS committee – we passed 4 new ones recently with another 11 available for assessment in 2015.

Midlothian

The Council at its meeting of 24 June 2014 approved the development strategy and key policy changes to be included in the new Midlothian Local Development Plan (MLDP). The Proposed Plan itself is still being drafted and the period for representations is likely to be in early 2015 – we are going to have a busy first quarter of 2015 with Local Plan Developments.

West Lothian

Detailed planning permission has been given for 50 housing units at a site just south of a recently assessed and passed Local Biodiversity Site at Briestonhill Moss. Land west of Murieston road, Murieston is subject to housing proposals and there are several Local Biodiversity Sites in the area, including prospective new linear water and banks that will be assessed by that LBS committee soon.

Tim Duffy

Planning Contacts

Midlothian and East Lothian: Susan Manson - mansons@castlesteads.net, or at Castlesteads, Dalkeith, EH22 2NJ.

West Lothian: Dr Cameron Easton - dr.c.easton@gmail.com or at 1 Bellsburn Avenue, Linlithgow, West Lothian, EH49 7LD.

Lothians Group Planning Secretary: Tim Duffy - Flat 4F2, 34 Warrender Park Terrace, Edinburgh, EH9 1ED, Tel/Ans 0131 2288785.



The many birds of Corstorphine Hill

As part of the SWT's series of winter talks, Edinburgh based birder Ian Moore delivered a highly enjoyable and in-depth account of the varied birdlife of one of the city's best loved green spaces, Corstorphine Hill. Over a period of six to seven years Ian has recorded around eighty species of bird on the Hill. As well as highlighting several interesting occasional visitors - including ravens, peregrine falcons, and crossbills - he also provided details on the influx of visiting birds to be seen throughout the year, such as willow warblers and chiffchaffs in the summer and waxwings and redpolls in the winter. Ian also provided his own footage of popular resident birds such as great spotted woodpeckers, nuthatches, and tawny owls, all visible throughout the year. The talk was an encouraging reminder of the wealth of birds, common and uncommon, to be found all year round at this easily accessible wildlife hotspot in the heart of the city.



To keep up to date with sightings of wildlife on Corstorphine Hill, you can follow Ian's personal blog at www.tumblr.com/blog/chilloutdoors.

Veronica Bell

Events for your diary

Dancing Grebes at Linlithgow - Saturday 28 March, 7am

Early morning walk at Linlithgow Loch, led by Gavin Stewart. Should hopefully see breeding pairs of Great Crested Grebes dancing and displaying in the early morning light, and also hear the dawn chorus of other birds.

Meet at SW corner of Loch at 7 am. Bring binoculars and warm clothing.

If interested in rounding off the visit with breakfast and more talk at the Stewarts, please let Averil know - gaveril.stewart@virigin.net - 01506-842676. All, including non-members, welcome.

Talk on Whitesands Quarry, Dunbar - Thursday 12 March

During the past two years RSPB and Lafarge Tarmac have been working together to assess the wildlife potential of Lafarge Tarmac's Whitesands quarry near Dunbar. This talk will provide a summary of progress from the development of the Feasibility Study that scoped out the site's potential for habitat creation/restoration to the development of a restoration management plan setting out the longer term aims, objectives and aspirations for the site.

Aberlady - Saturday 20 June, 10:30 am

Outing to Aberlady led by reserve warden John Harrison. We should be able to view some of the breeding birds that will be there. The timing of the outing also means the local flora should be at its very best.

We will meet in the reserve car-park which is also accessible by public transport.

AGM and Water of Leith talk - Tuesday 23 April

The AGM will be accompanied by talk from Helen Brown of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust. Helen will be discussing the flora and fauna of the waterway as well as some of the conservation challenges facing the area.

AGM and talks are held at 33 Melville Street, Edinburgh and start at 7.30pm. Admission is free but donations are appreciated.

Disabled access available by prior arrangement, please contact Karen Pearson 0131 667 3855. Non-members welcome.

To read reports on the October outings to Beecraigs and Aberlady along with more info about upcoming events go to www.swtlothians.org.uk

News from Lothian Reserves from 2014

It has been what is perhaps best described as a steady year on our reserves with weather to match, generally close to average throughout the year. There have still been a few interesting wildlife records though. On a sad note we have to record that David Jamieson, who generously donated Brock Wood to the Trust, died during the year. As the work to replace non-native conifers with native woodland matures, so Brock Wood should provide a lasting memorial to David to whom we remain very grateful.

Interesting bird records include the return, after several years' absence, of a pair of Great Crested Grebes at Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch. They bred successfully and raised two young. Intriguingly there have been very few sightings of Otter on Duddingston Loch this year leaving the possibility that less disturbance suited the Grebes. However if Otters were less evident at Duddingston Loch this was not the case at Bogburn Lagoons near Bathgate where one was photographed for the first time. There is also a first record of Nuthatch in Bawsinch though we may still have to wait a while for them to establish and breed. Several sightings of Cuckoo, both male and female, provided a highlight at Red Moss – this now seems to be a very good place to see Cuckoo. The highlight of the common bird census at Roslin Glen, now in its thirtieth year, was the return of a pair of Tawny Owls, who produced 3 young, while the biggest change noted was in the numbers of Starlings coming back to the woods to nest – a very healthy 14 pairs were recorded this year in the study area.

Butterflies generally had a satisfactory year with records of Northern Brown Argus at Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch and Holly Blue just outside the reserve boundary. Also at Duddingston Loch a Common Hawker dragonfly was recorded suggesting that recent management work is having a beneficial effect.

Most of the management work on our reserves this year has been a continuation of work started in previous years. Installation of plastic sheet dams, to block up ditches dug many years ago to try to drain the mosses, has continued at Longridge Moss, Tailend Moss, Hermand Birchwood and Red Moss. At Brock Wood we have continued selectively felling non-native conifers to enhance and increase the area of native woodland. We continue to try to extend conservation grazing to improve the grassland in more of our reserves and we used a Peatland Action Grant to repair and alter fences at Longridge Moss to extend the area of grazing. We are also applying for grants to allow us to establish grazing at Petershill quarry near Bathgate. At Linhouse Glen where, in the absence of finding a solution to obtaining access to allow grazing, our cutting and raking of the meadow areas does seem to be showing definite benefit with marked increases in the flowering of Devils Bit Scabious and Yellow Rattle. At Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch we have continued the work to clear the invasive North American Red-Osier Dogwood and also to cut out trees from the reedbed to the west of Duddingston Loch. We are hoping that with enough concentrated effort over the next few years we can really get on top of the problem and revitalise this area of reed.

Ken Knowles

Bawsinch guided walks 2015

There will be a guided walk in Bawsinch starting at 2pm on Sunday 24th May, 28th June, 26th July and 18th October. Meet at the hide via the wicket gate at the corner of Duddingston Road West on the south side of Duddingston Loch. Visitors who have already been on a guided walk will also be welcome to spend time walking round part of the reserve or bird watching from the hide. The reserve will close at 4pm.

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).

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