

# Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians Group Newsletter

<http://swtlothians.org.uk>

## News from Lothian reserves, 2016

A rather average year for weather but we have had some exciting new wildlife records of interest. At Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch we recorded our first Little Egret – a fleeting visit only – but we hope in the future our Grey Heron colony will have a few pairs of Egrets to add variety. At Bawsinch we recorded our first Speckled Wood butterflies. Both these species have been moving steadily north over the past few years so this may well be a sign of climate change.

At Woodhall Dean there are now three well-used Badger setts and lots of associated activity – including some less welcome scratch marks on trees adjacent to the paths. After a dip in numbers last year Adders were also back in view with sometimes 4-5 visible at once.

A survey carried out around the Duddingston Loch area as part of the South of Scotland Bat Survey confirmed five species of bat. These included the expected Soprano and Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat and Natterer's Bat, but there was also a confirmed record of Nathusius' Pipistrelle, a rarely recorded species which until quite recently was thought only to occur in Britain on migration. Whether our record was simply passing through or resident we cannot know. The survey also provided tantalising hints of Noctule and/or Leisler's Bats, although these were not confirmed as records. There is clearly hope that in future we will be able to confirm the importance of the area for a wide range of bat species.

The work by the Lothian Ringing Group at Hadfast Valley continues to provide some interesting records with a Long-tailed Tit re-trapped in March that had been originally ringed there in 2008. This is close to the BTO longevity record of 8 years, 8 months for Long-tailed Tit. The Common Bird Census at Roslin Glen continued, with the results suggesting that the late start to Spring somewhat depressed numbers of most breeding birds. The Great Crested Grebes at Bawsinch returned early to the reserve. They appeared to be settling well into a nest close to the hide when they suddenly deserted. It seems they are particularly sensitive to disturbance by Otters passing nearby which may well have been the reason for the desertion.

At Addiewell Bing our convenor recorded Broad-leaved Helleborine, a scarce orchid species in West Lothian and a first for the reserve.

Aside from the routine work on reserves we have continued with efforts to extend grazing to assist our management work. At Petershill near Bathgate we have improved the fencing so that we can introduce our own cattle onto the reserve. This depends very much on being able to recruit some local people to share the work of a simple daily check on the cattle. If you think you could help with this we would be very grateful if you would get in touch with SWT HQ (Peter Gilbert or Julian Warman). Windfarm construction is a major feature around some of our East Lothian reserves and work has started, with our agreement, on construction of an access track through our Linn Dean reserve to allow building of an adjacent windfarm.

In Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch we marked something of a milestone in our management work this autumn when Lothian Conservation Volunteers cleared the last significant patch of the invasive and non-native Red Osier Dogwood. The reserve really will not be the same without regular work parties hacking their way into the impenetrable jungle of the Dogwood. We now need to finish clearing the Snowberry patches – probably next year – and then can sit back and relax (well maybe not!).

Ken Knowles



# Chairman's notes

Looking back over the last year, a couple of things stand out in particular. One of the objectives of our nature reserves is to promote environmental education and last year, we welcomed visits to Bawsinch, organised by the Green Team, of pupils from Holyrood High School. They learnt about the management of the reserve and did a little conservation work at the same time. We also welcomed regular visits by severely disabled children from St Crispin's School in Edinburgh who are finding the quiet environment of the reserve an ideal place for outdoor learning activities.

A personal highlight was seeing about 30 Bottlenose Dolphins swimming around our boat while on a trip out

to Fidra in the summer to help clear invasive Tree Mallow. They were also very visible when we were on the island. This did nothing for the productivity of the volunteers clearing the Mallow but added a lot to the enjoyment of the day! Such an exciting event is a reminder of the importance of the marine environment just offshore from Edinburgh and how much we should value it.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to warmly welcome Sarah Sigswirth and Goda Petrylaite to the Lothians sub-committee. I'm sure your support will prove invaluable in the year ahead.

Ken Knowles

## Can collection volunteers urgently needed!

Can collections have been the mainstay of our fundraising for many years and enable us to keep the Lothian Group running. Unfortunately, the number of new volunteers is not keeping pace with the numbers retiring and we urgently need more to keep the can collections going. If you think you could help occasionally for two hours at a supermarket near you please get in touch with either Barbara or Ken Knowles – phone 0131 539 6643.



## Planning matters

\*\*This Planning Matters piece has been condensed to fit within Lothian Talk. The full article can be viewed at: [swtlothians.org.uk/2017/01/17/planning-matters-spring-2017/](http://swtlothians.org.uk/2017/01/17/planning-matters-spring-2017/) \*\*

### East Lothian

We responded to the Proposed East Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016. This plan and all supporting documents can be viewed at the following link:

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/204/local\\_development\\_plan/1777/proposed\\_local\\_development\\_plan](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/204/local_development_plan/1777/proposed_local_development_plan)

### Para 2.47 and 2.48 Levenhall Links

The Trust welcomes Prop MH18 to continue to manage the land at Levenhall Links to Prestonpans to 'improve the availability of suitable habitat for qualifying interest for the Firth of Forth SPA'. However the Levenhall site is of a wider wildlife interest than just the qualifying interest of the SPA. We would like to see a broader statement of the management of the site.

The Trust would like to see a commitment to creating a Local Nature Reserve at Levenhall to build on the local interest and support for the site and to enhance and develop the valuable management already carried out at the site by Scottish Power and the Council.

The Main Issues Report (para 6.26) mentioned that there may be opportunities to create a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) at this location. This was supported by the Trust in our comments. It is disappointing to note that this proposal is not carried forward into the LDP

### Para 5.24 and 5.25

The Trust welcomes the intention to adopt a Green Network Strategy and notes that the Council 'will have regard for the Green Network Strategy when assessing planning applications.'

The Trust suggests that the preparation of the Strategy is a priority in light of the considerable extent of the proposed development in the LDP in order to maximise the opportunities to create and enhance green infrastructure.

The Trust hopes that sufficient resources within the Council are available to prepare the Strategy. There is a risk the pace of development may overtake the preparation of the Strategy.

### Para 6.11 Local Nature Conservation Sites, Local Nature Reserve and Country Parks

The Trust notes the new Biodiversity Sites and has previously commented on the selection process. We welcome the protection given in policy NH3.

### Para 6.14 The East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan (ELBAP)

The Trust welcomes the proposal to refer to the ELBAP in considering planning applications but notes that the current plan ran out in 2013. The Trust would like to see a commitment to the updating of the plan and some indication of how it will link in the proposed Green Network Strategy.

## Para 6.16

The Trust welcomes the statements in para 6.16. The Plan has extensive areas of land committed for development. Whilst the loss of land is regrettable, there is an opportunity for habitat creation and enhancement. We hope to see the Council ensuring that landscaping associated with new developments will add value to the environment.

The plan also contains reference to new building at Elphinstone:

2.101 Land at Elphinstone West is allocated for around 80 houses. The encroachment of built development on to the rising land to the north must be minimised where woodland planting must be provided to expand the existing shelter belt to the east and to contribute to Green Network objectives. There is also scope to accommodate open space to the north of the site and to ensure it connects with the existing open space on Main Street and the adjacent playing field. Provision should also be made within the site for turning and parking areas for the existing playing field to the west of the site in line with PROP CF1. There may be a need to expand Elphinstone Primary School campus as a result of this development in line with PROP ED4. A Flood Risk Assessment is required. Structural landscape planting will be required to integrate this site with the surroundings.

Responding to the concerns of a local member, we checked with TWIC who confirmed there were no records of Badger setts within 500 metres of the site. Apart from the possibility of Badgers using the field for foraging it may be hard to build a case against the housing based on wildlife presence alone.

## West Lothian

The proposed West Lothian Development Plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers on 28th October 2016. A Reporter will examine the Plan from January 2017 onwards. The Council has indicated that the Trust's representations have not yet been resolved and so will be considered by the Reporter.

The proposal by the River Forth Fisheries Trust for improvements to the Bog Burn watercourse has been submitted as a formal planning application. This is adjacent to, and partly overlaps, the Bog Burn LBS. The development will result in much needed habitat improvement and an increase in the extent of wetland in the area.

## Midlothian

In 2015 we commented on the Draft Midlothian Local Plan. In October we were informed that the plan was now having its final examination by a Scottish Office Reporter. We think our formal proposal that Mavisbank Estate Local Biodiversity Site should be joined with a neighbouring council ranger site and become a council designated Local Nature Reserve will be dealt with during this process.

## SES Plan Proposed Strategic Development Plan 2016

The Trust made the following comments (and more) on the proposed Strategic Development Plan for Edinburgh and South East Scotland (the 4 Lothian councils, the Borders and Fife – 6 in all, this plan is the second one that replaces the old Lothian Region Structure Plan).

2. Vision: There is a certain amount of read-across between the SES Plan vision, the Vision of the Central Scotland Green Network and that of the Edinburgh Living Landscape, this is welcomed. However, The Trust would like greater explicit reference to the importance of a healthy natural environment.

2.1 In the Trust's experience, developers are very unlikely to pay any attention to "Development should" as opposed to "Development must". Unfortunately "should" is more often than not applied to green infrastructure/green network guidance regarding development. There needs to be a step change in the way developers are forced to consider green infrastructure if we are to realise the multiple developments expected in the Green Network Guidance.

2.2 The Trust considers that green infrastructure should be included within cross boundary infrastructure. There should be a similar level of strategic planning associated with green and blue infrastructure as with traditional "grey" infrastructure.

3.4 The Trust notes that land may be released for development. This makes the proper weighting for green networks vital. Contribution to the overall green network should be made a material consideration of development. Assessing the "green quality" of a development has been highlighted as an issue by local authorities and by developers. As such, the Scottish Wildlife Trust has been developing the "Natural Capital Planning Standard" which aims to give each development an overall rating in terms of the ecosystem services it is delivering. The Trust would be happy to meet with the team to discuss this.

3.8 The following should be added to the bullet point list: "To act as a buffer to designated sites, such as SSSIs, or locally important wildlife sites"

Enhanced Green Networks The Trust welcome this section and applaud the SES Plan for including it.

Tim Duffy

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## 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.

Edinburgh: Alan Templeton - alan.templeton@hotmail.co.uk

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

# Events for your diary

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## Porpoises, Dolphins and Whales of Scotland - and their Conservation Thursday 9th March. 7:30pm

A talk by Dr. Fiona Read from the Whale and Dolphin Society about cetaceans that are found in Scottish waters and the historic and current threats that they face.

## AGM & Talk - Wild and Free in the City Thursday 27th April. 7:30pm

This years AGM will be accompanied by a talk from Anna Canning of Floramedica. The talk will give an insight to the exciting world of urban foraging and explore how plants found right on your doorstep can be used in food, drink, medicine and more.

The above talks will take place at 33 Melville Street, EH3 7JF.

Talks are free but donations are greatly appreciated

Disabled access available by prior arrangement, please contact Peter Bain - 0131 447 8937

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## Guided walk at St. Abbs Head - Saturday 10th June. 10:20am

We last visited St Abb's in 2014 so this will be a welcome return to this spectacular coastal reserve.

We will meet NTS ranger Liza Cole outside the visitor centre next to the Reserve Car Park (NT 913 674) at 10.20am. Taking the cliff-top path we will walk to the lighthouse. There we will spend some time overlooking the busiest part of the seabird colony before walking back to the visitor centre via by the Mire Loch, finishing by around 3pm.

Please note that although we will be following good paths and tracks, there are several steep sections so a reasonably good level of fitness is required and you should wear appropriate walking shoes or boots. Please remember to bring a packed lunch and take binoculars.

Adults £5, Children £3, payable on the day to NTS.

We are planning a car share for this trip - please register your intention to come with Peter Bain on 0131 447 8937 or email him at [pjbain@hotmail.com](mailto:pjbain@hotmail.com) to let him know whether you can offer a lift or need one.

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## Badger watching- 21st, 29th June/3rd, 11th, 19th July

Enjoy a chance to spot one of the UK's most elusive mammals at our summer badger watches.

As the organisers do not want to publicise the exact location of this event details will be given only to those who attend. Numbers are very limited so booking is essential. Suggested donation £5 per person.

To book in please contact Peter Bain - 0131 447 8937

## Summer flora and moths at Aberlady- Saturday 15th July. 10am

Guided walk at Aberlady Bay where Reserve Warden John Harrison will have set up moth traps the previous evening and will open these up when we are there. We will also look at the diverse summer flora and birdlife.

Free. No need to book.

Contact: Colin Shepherd - 0131 229 5427

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## Guided walks at Bawsinch - Sundays - 9th Apr/14th May/11th June/23rd July. 2pm

Come along to our guided walks at Bawsinch. Take a guided walk in Bawsinch nature reserve or simply enjoy a walk around part of the normally closed reserve and take in some bird watching from the hide.

Meet at Bawsinch hide at 2pm. Bring suitable footwear, clothing and binoculars. Accessible by public transport. No need to pre-book.

Free but donations are much appreciated.

Contact: Ken Knowles - 0131 539 6643

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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, 110 Commercial Street, Edinburgh, EH4 6NF. It is also a Scottish registered charity (charity number SC005792).

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