Chairman's notes

The trust overall has had considerable success in recent years in increasing membership but this has also meant that our print run and cost for producing Lothian Talk to distribute to all members in the Lothians has also steadily increased.

In reviewing expenditure of the Lothian Group we are concerned that too high a proportion of our limited funds is having to be spent to maintain the current four page paper edition. We have therefore decided to reduce it to two pages after this issue which will inevitably reduce the number of length or articles we can include in the paper version.

However we also feel that we could make better use of our website and this is an area we intend to improve progressively over the next year or so. By doing this we should be able to provide our members with more information about our work and our social events and still have more funds available to support conservation work in the Lothians.

Also, if there are any individuals or companies who would like to help sponsor production of Lothian Talk we would love to hear from you! If interested, please contact Trevor Paterson, Lothians Group Treasurer (treffor.paterson@gmail.com)

Ken Knowles

Appeal for volunteers:
Bathgate area

In the news from reserves last year we noted that we had improved the boundary fencing at Petershill reserve on the edge of Bathgate in order to be able to graze the area.

To use our own stock – the Flying Flock – means having volunteers willing to share doing a simple stock check on a daily basis.

If anyone living in the area is interested and would like to know more about what is involved please contact either Peter Gilbert or Julian Warman at SWT HQ.
While most wildlife records this year were of regularly occurring species there was at least one new record. At Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch a Red-veined Darter dragonfly was recorded for the first time. However, as with last year’s first record of Nathusius’ Pipistrelle bat, the darter may well have been simply passing through as it is noted as a migratory species.

Butterflies at many sites seem to have had a poor year, particularly in Bawsinch where we started recording on a regular transect but found that numbers of many of the common species were exceptionally low. This was however compensated by regular records of Speckled Wood which was first recorded in the reserve last year. In contrast, Linn Dean remains the best Lothian reserve for butterflies with 29 adult Northern Brown Argus present on 2nd August and large numbers of other species such as Small Heath, Dark Green Fritillary, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Common Blue, Small Copper and the usual Whites. Wall Brown was not seen this year at Linn Dean but was recorded at East Lammermoir Deans and Woodhall Dean.

As regards birds, there were some encouraging reports, with proof of breeding of Nuthatch at Woodhall Dean. The Nuthatch had been heard in the Spring and Autumn in the central area of the reserve where coppiced Oak was dominant but no nest site had been observed. The annual cleaning of the 46 nest boxes in December found dried mud round the hole and lid of one box and inside bark and leaves made up the nest. On top of the nest were 4 white, speckled eggs, later identified positively as Nuthatch eggs. How many may have fledged is unknown but proof of, at least, attempted breeding is a cause for great satisfaction.

At our Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch reserve, Green Woodpecker was seen in the reserve for the first time for a good number of years – our hope is that the grazing of Murder Acre will improve feeding for Green Woodpeckers and encourage them to breed in the future. A particular delight, Kingfishers, have been seen almost daily in Bawsinch over the autumn and early winter giving excellent views and photographs. Sadly, Great Crested Grebes failed to breed this year with only one bird arriving in the spring which eventually left after not finding a mate.

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**Talks for your diary**

These talks will take place at Guide HQ, 33 Melville Street, EH3 7JF.
All talks are free but donations are greatly appreciated. There is no need to pre-book
Disabled access is available by prior arrangement, please contact Peter Bain - 0131 447 8937

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**The Secret Life of Bats**  
**Thursday 8th March. 7:30pm**  
Learn more about the bats we have here in Scotland and pick up tips of how you can help them thrive in your area.

A talk by Liz Ferrell, Scottish Officer for the Bat Conservation Trust  
Contact: Declan Duffy - 0793 101 5891

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**AGM and Talk: Red Sea Coral Reefs, a Divers Eye View**  
**Thursday 26th April. 7:30pm**
This year, our AGM will be accompanied by a talk from Gordon Swann, giving an insight into the ecology of the unique coral reefs of the red sea, in the context of several scuba diving expeditions he has undertaken there.

Contact: Ken Knowles 0131 539 6643

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**News from Lothian Reserves 2017**

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Our convenor for Roslin Glen reserve has been having a look at the data from the Common Bird Breeding Census (CBC) which has been carried out by a band of committed volunteers on an annual basis since 1984. Some of the results show quite marked changes over the years. Examples are Greater Spotted Woodpecker which gradually increased from around 3 pairs to 8 pairs breeding, but has recently been declining; Wren territories which have increased from around 20 territories to around 60 – 70 breeding territories; Willow Warbler which has declined from a maximum of around 20 breeding pairs to just 2 in less than 20 years; Nuthatch which was first seen to be breeding in 2010 with one pair and has now increased to 8 pairs and Bullfinch which has shown a steady increase from 1 – 2 pairs to 10 breeding pairs. All very interesting and shows the value of long term monitoring, particularly in a managed woodland reserve, although the changes are not always easy to explain!

Management on our reserves has been largely routine during the year, though at Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch we are attempting to extend the area of suitable nesting sites for Herons on their main nesting island. While the area of trees is increasing on the island, the young trees, mainly alder, are very tall and thin and seem unlikely to be attractive to a Heron wanting to build a nest. As an experiment we have tried pollarding some of the trees, cutting the stems at about 2-3 metres above the ground, with the hope that the trees will form a bushy top which will attract a Herons to build nests. Time will tell whether we really understand what makes a tree attractive to a nesting Heron.

A more unusual development on our reserves has been at Johnston Terrace Wildlife Garden where we agreed last year to a proposal as part of the Edinburgh Arts Festival to allow the erection of a temporary studio workshop within the garden. The “Palm House” which was constructed was manned during the Festival and open to the public and has since been retained – it is easily visible from Johnston Terrace – and it is hoped will form part of the arts festival again. More details are available on the Edinburgh Arts Festival website which gives background about the artist Bobby Niven, whose concept this was.

Ken Knowles
West Lothian
The wind farm proposal at Fauch Hill was rejected by West Lothian Council mainly on the basis of landscape impact on the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

City of Edinburgh
There are local community proposals to try and take over Astley Ainslie Hospital rounds to ensure this important green oasis survives its sale. Local members are involved.

The council Local Biodiversity Site committee assessed passed 5 more new LBS’ and more are being processed.

East Lothian
An application at Bangley Quarry Huntington near Haddington for erection of an anaerobic digestion plant which is actually around a Geological Conservation Review Site has had an SNH pre-application opinion that the Proposed Development “will not affect the SSSI, and has a very limited chance of affecting any part of the volcanic rock outside of the SSSI”

Midlothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan
Midlothian Council held a Community Planning day in November 2017 to which all sectors of Midlothian life were invited to contribute to the Annual Community Plan. Environment is one of the key themes of the plan and the discussion covered a wide variety of environment related topics. Tim Duffy and Susan Manson represented SWT. The main outcome from our perspective was a commitment to updating and revising the Midlothian Biodiversity Plan in 2018.

Midlothian is to be commended on acting on the results of the Community Planning day and in the first week of the New Year, organised a meeting of a new Midlothian Biodiversity Partnership. Midlothian Planning team is committed to revising and updating the Local Biodiversity Plan and there is a head of steam built up after the meeting with members of the partnership, which includes SWT, to take the project forward and have a plan in place for later this year. There was a general agreement that a simple community focussed plan was preferred.

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.

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.