



**Scottish
Wildlife
Trust**

Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust: Lothians Group Newsletter

Dates for your Diary Summer 2019

Guided Walks: **Bawsinch NR**

- Sundays 16th Jun, 7th July, 4th Aug, 15th Sept & 13th Oct; all 2pm-4pm
- Meet at Bawsinch hide

Guided Walks: **Badger Watch**

(location given out prior to events)

- 1st, 3rd, 7th & 9th July; all from 7.30pm onwards
- Booking essential; numbers limited to 8 per session

Guided Walk: **Birds & Botany**

- Sat 6th July; 10am-1pm
- Meet at Aberlady Nature Reserve carpark; cost £3

Guided Cycle Tour: **West**

Lothian Nature Reserves

- Sat 27th July; 10am-4pm
- Meet at Linlithgow train station (max. distance 25 miles)

Guided Walk: **Bat Watch**

- Mon 2nd Sept; 8.30pm-10pm
- Meet at Blackford Pond

Talk: **Dragonflies of Scotland**

- Thurs 17th Oct; 7.30pm-9pm
- Andrea Hudspeth, British Dragonfly Society

Talk Locations

Unless stated otherwise, all talks are free of charge & take place at:

Girlguiding Edinburgh HQ
33 Melville Street
Edinburgh, EH3 7JF

Full details of all events can be found online at swtlothians.org.uk/events or in the SWT events booklet



Volunteers planting trees, Brock Wood

Photo: David Ross

Notes from the Chair

by Ken Knowles

Lothian Talk is now available via email! As well as the paper version always issued with the SWT magazine, an electronic version of this newsletter will be emailed to all Lothian members who would like to receive Lothian Talk directly, and considerably earlier than the paper version. Simply visit the SWT website, scroll to the bottom of any page and click, 'Subscribe Now'. To receive Lothian Talk electronically, tick to receive "Information from my local group": www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

AGM: Our 2018/19 AGM was held on 25th April and the minutes and accounts, along with a list of the elected committee members, are now on our Lothian Group website: www.swtlothians.org.uk

Funds: Fundraising proved considerably more successful in 2018/19 than the previous year, with £4180 raised primarily through our supermarket bucket-collections. As a result of the savings we have put in place (primarily by reducing the paper version of Lothian Talk to two sides) and the increased income, we have been able to make a contribution of £1000 to fencing at our Brock Wood reserve in East Lothian, as well as £1000 to fund the purchase of a chain saw and protective equipment. The chainsaw is retained by the Lothian Group and will be used by qualified volunteers working on Lothian reserves, initially mainly at Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch nature reserve.

Notes from the Chair (continued)

At the end of the year we still had substantial general funds so we decided that we could also reinstate our previous practice, at least for this year, of making an unrestricted £1000 donation to SWT HQ. We have earmarked a sum of £1000 for next year to help pay for some interpretation boards to be erected at Wardie Bay as part of our involvement in the 'Edinburgh Foreshore' initiative. We also intend to fund botanical surveys of our reserves, starting with Brock Wood, as these surveys are a fundamental part of monitoring the effectiveness of our reserve management.

Reserves Work: We have done a considerable amount of tree and shrub planting over the winter, with 150 shrubs being planted in Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch reserve. At Brock Wood in East Lothian, an area was replanted that had formerly contained predominantly non-native conifers and other non-native trees. Some 450 Scottish native broadleaved trees were planted by the 'Friday Volunteers'. A mix of tree species has been used including Oak, Cherry, Alder, Hawthorn, Holly, Hazel, Rowan, Willow and Bird Cherry. The Oak, which will form the core of the wood, were of local provenance using acorns which were collected a few years ago and had been grown on in the SWT tree nursery. All of the trees have been protected with vole guards and wire netting cages which have been recycled from other reserves nearby.

If you have anything you would like to contribute to future editions of Lothian Talk, please get in touch via email at editor@swtlothians.org.uk

Cycling the Lothian Reserves

In July 2018, five of us met up at **Bawsinch Nature Reserve** in Edinburgh for a tour of reserves in Midlothian. This was planned as a cycle trip for the younger generation so it was encouraging that the youngest of us on this trip was 57. Thankfully the weather was great for the whole day, with enough cloud cover to keep the temperatures comfortable while cycling. We started off with a quick walk around Bawsinch reserve, which is quite awesome given its location in the suburbs of a major conurbation, and is well worth a visit to see the tree species and the birds on Duddingston Loch.

We then cycled via Musselburgh to the next reserve at **Hadfast Valley**. This has large areas of scrub, grassland and broadleaved woodland and is also a centre for bird ringing due to the ecological diversity of the area. During our visit, we met a volunteer bird ringer and who carries out bird number census studies every 2-3 weeks throughout the season. It was a pleasure to see how the small birds were handled and recorded: chiff chaff, who had probably travelled from West Africa, were very amenable to being handled, while the baby Blue Tits and Great Tits were less than happy and quite aggressive when being handled.



Our next stop was **Roslin Glen**. This involved a long cycle ride through Dalkeith and the old railway line leading to Roslin. The Roslin Glen reserve is quite something and well worth a visit, although one needs a good head for heights and a strong pair of boots since the approach into it is quite steep. However, it is quite astonishing how much 'original nature' has been preserved in an area so close to Edinburgh.

One needs to be fit to tackle the cycle climb out of Roslin Glen up to the village of Roslin with gradients of 15%. However, we all managed and had a well deserved tea and scone break at Dolly's Tea room in Roslin before embarking on our last leg of the trip to **Erraid Wood** just off the A702 (the main road from Biggar to Edinburgh). Erraid Wood is situated to the north east edge of the Pentland Hills and is largely mature broadleaf woodland which attracts a range of woodland birds such as the Spotted Flycatcher and Tree Creeper. Unfortunately they were not present during our visit but that did not detract from the magic and beauty of the place.

Our 35km journey ended with a cycle ride back into Edinburgh along the very busy A702. It was an exceptionally nice day out.

Allan Mathieson

Next Cycle Tour of West Lothian Reserves: Saturday 27th July

More information about joining us for this year's ride can be found online at swtlothians.org.uk/events



Edinburgh Wildlife Watch group (5-10 year olds). Meets one Sunday every month from 10am-12pm. Cost usually £2.

Visit scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/watch-group/edinburgh/ for more information about how to join!

...visits the Scottish Seabird Centre, May 2019

It was a wet and windy morning but that did not dampen spirits as our eleven Wildlife Watchers gathered at the Scottish Seabird Centre in North Berwick on Sunday morning! This was our first trip to the centre and we couldn't wait to start exploring.

We got to know the group members in the bright and airy Education Centre, and followed a secret tunnel down to the Discovery Centre. We were ushered into the 3D cinema, donned our special 3D glasses and settled in to watch the inimitable David Attenborough take us through the wonders of flight looking at the first creatures to take flight - insects! The film was slightly too long to hold the attention of some of our younger members, so a small group of us slipped out to investigate the centre. We made crayon rubbings of all sorts of different seabirds and had great fun using the cameras to spot sea birds on the Bass Rock. We had loads of fun pointing the camera in different directions, hunting for gannets and puffins. And we have it under good authority that no trip to the centre would be complete without a run around in the soft play!



Once the rest of the group joined us, and we'd investigated every nook and cranny of the centre, we headed for the beach! Armed with our seashell spotter sheets and a bucket to collect the spoils, we explored the coastline next to the centre. We found seashore treasures including twisted dog whelk, spotted fragments of sea urchin, winkles, limpet and razor clam shells, a whole edible crab and even a tiny cowrie shell! We munched our packed lunches on the sand as our session drew to a close and watched some eider ducks and their chicks bobbing on the waves. There were a few slightly soggy feet as we headed back to the centre but lots of big smiles and happy faces. This was the last of our spring Wildlife Watch sessions before our summer sessions start in June.

Here is a quick look back at the spring sessions:

In March we were at Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch nature reserve, a firm favourite with our group! We spent the session looking for signs of spring and went on an expedition to the otter hide at the far end of the reserve. On our way we saw deer footprints, tree ferns and willow catkins. We didn't spot the otter this time but we used our binoculars to see the heron, swans, grebes and ducks hanging out on Duddingston

Loch. We headed back to the woodland clearing to do a minibeast hunt. We found lots of centipedes, woodlice and millipedes before heading back down the track to finish the session at the big green gates.

In April we held our first session at the Wells o' Weerie. Two of the Holyrood rangers helped us explore this exciting hidden site near the innocent railway! We went pond dipping, played in a den of woven willow and explored the nearby woodland. The rangers even let some of the group climb in their land rover and speak to the other rangers on their walkie talkies!

Nicky Langridge-Smith and Katherine Travers, Wildlife Watch Group

Planning Matters – May 2019

Midlothian

Midlothian Council has formally adopted the new **Midlothian Biodiversity Action Plan** (2019 – 2024). A number of meetings of the Biodiversity Partnership took place over the last 12 months and resulted in a new updated plan. The plan is short, easy to follow and comprehensive. It is also realistic in recognising what can be achieved within the constraints of local government and other partners at this time of austerity. However, given recent reports from the UN on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, it is also timely. The SWT is a partner in a number of actions and we look forward to developing these. It is available to read on the Council's website: www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/1231/environment/290/biodiversity

Midlothian is also developing **Nature Conservation Planning Guidance**. The first draft looked excellent and very comprehensive and we look forward to seeing the next version.

South of Penicuik there is a Pre Application Consultation (PAC) on land which was the former Wellington School.

The proposals are for 'low density rural housing' and associated infrastructure. This site is close to Milkhall Pond which is an SWT Reserve. We have asked to be consulted on the next stage. The developer is obliged to consult the community so there will be further opportunities to find out more about this development.

The next 'big' development expected in Midlothian is the proposal for the Scottish Film Studio. This will take up an extensive tract of land south of Dalkeith. The land has lain largely untouched since being identified for industrial development some time ago and is adjacent to a core path/cycle route. There will be potential loss of habitat including some scrub woodland if this does go ahead and the location is only a few yards from the boundary of the Dalkeith Estate Local Biodiversity Site. The application is expected in June 2019.

East Lothian

East Lothian Council has appointed a new Biodiversity Officer, Catherine Cumming, who started in March. She replaces Stuart MacPherson, who left after many years, and we look forward to working with her.

East Lothian has just published its **Green Network Strategy** as part of its supplementary planning guidance. It brings together all the elements of sustainable living and some very commendable aspirations including woodland creation and safe guarding green corridors. The Guidance also highlights conserving and restoring peatland, and maintaining and enhancing saltmarsh. A lot of the proposed works depend on contributions from developers. It is difficult to identify who or which partner will take the initiative to take some of these projects forward but it is to be hoped that someone does. There is a proposal to set up a Green Network Working Group with 'key stakeholders'. Additionally the Council will '...look into mapping ecosystem need and demand, potentially via the Scottish Wildlife Trust Eco-serv tool'. The strategy also refers to the intention to write a new EL Biodiversity Action Plan by forming a partnership with contributors, and Susan and I will contribute as we did for the recent Midlothian plan.

West Lothian

The possibility of a joint management approach for Little Boghead, Bog Burn and the Flood Lagoons was discussed at the West Lothian LBS meeting in March. Several initiatives in the area were mentioned, including proposals for interpretation at Little Boghead. It was agreed that the next step was to convene a meeting to discuss possible opportunities for co-ordinated activity in the area, and West Lothian Council Ranger Service was asked to co-ordinate this.

West Lothian Planning assures us that LBS/pLBS are taken fully into account in considering planning applications. However, an application from 2018 showed that sometimes consultants miss - or deliberately leave out - local council LBS designations. The application was for 2500 houses at Gavieside Farm, Polbeath. Although the development will be directly adjacent to Bristonhill Moss LBS, the presence of the LBS was not mentioned in the Environmental Impact Appraisal. The original application was looked at because detailed applications are now being made for the first phases of housing. We need to get back to West Lothian Council to seek assurances that the LBS will not be affected by the development.

A proposed housing development at Wilcoxholme Farm, Linlithgow is adjacent to the Union Canal LBS. However, it does not seem likely that the development will have an impact on the canal itself.

City of Edinburgh

Work on implementing the new Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan has started and a CEC LBS meeting reviewed and passed new sites. No significant new applications appeared in this period but work continues monitoring Astley Ainslie hospital greenspaces site (now hopefully a community buy out) and other known about developments.

For planning matters affecting wildlife sites please write to:

Midlothian / East Lothian

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West Lothian

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