

## Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians Group

### Chair's Report 2020

Co-written by Ken Knowles and Nick Warren

#### Notes on the Committee

We have a main committee and a sub-committee to help run this group.

The main committee key responsibilities continue to be to oversee the activities of the SWT Lothians Group, monitor possible planning and planning development affecting Local Biodiversity Sites across the Lothians, fundraise; represent the Trust at local external events, manage the groups finance, allocate available financial resources and organise and run the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

While the sub-committee organises all the outdoor events, winter lectures, produces the Lothian Talk newsletter and maintains our website.

Due to ill health, Ken Knowles (Chair) resigned part way through this year and vice-chair Nick Warren took over as Chair until this AGM. Nick is looking to continue in this role going forward.

The main committee welcomed Carmina Cazan to its ranks. We nevertheless remain somewhat below strength and we have yet to find anyone to cover Publicity and Events which Ken suggested last year as an area we were not as active as he would like.

**Winter Talks and Summer Outings.** Over the last year the sub-committee has again managed to arrange an excellent series of talks and outings which continue to prove popular. The February talk on Climate Change by Professor Roy Thomson attracted our largest audience of recent times.

Because the Guide Hall on Melville Street has been put up for sale, we've had to look for an alternative venue for our indoor meetings. Our winter talks will now take place in the Cornerstone Centre, St John's Church, Princes St, Edinburgh.

**Lothian Talk.** We continue and wish to continue to offer two formats for our newsletter. The two-page paper format is sent alongside the magazine to all SWT members in the Lothians, while an extended electronic version may be received by email or read on our website. Currently about 42% of Lothian members have opted-in to receive news electronically.

Special thanks go to our editor, Kate, for her work in putting this information together.

**Planning Matters** is also another significant part of our work and we have kept inputting into local biodiversity action plans and any proposed planning developments near local

biodiversity sites. Detailed reports on recent activities of the planning group are contained in each edition of Lothian Talk on the website. Our Edinburgh volunteer planning representative, Alan Templeton moved on after a number of years of excellent work. Ian Whittaker has offered to take on this position.

**Reserves.** The Reserve Management Group Committee met twice over the past year. Its latest meeting in February was chaired by Peter Sykes on behalf of Ken.

The 21 reserves around the Lothians continue to offer wildlife surprises. At Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch for example, there were new species records. A Small Skipper butterfly was recorded for the first time on the flower meadow in Bawsinch and in late July a Broadbodied Chaser dragonfly was recorded over shallow water at the southwest end of Duddingston Loch.

The bird boxes at Woodhall Dean revealed a variety of occupants this year, making a change from the usual Blue tits and Great tits. A Nuthatch pair had closed the lid of a box with mud and successfully reared young. Redstarts were seen feeding young in one of the remaining front opening bird boxes, and yet another box was occupied by roosting Pipistrelle bats.

Selective felling has carried on over part of Brock Wood Reserve. The aim of the felling and subsequent replanting was to remove an area of predominantly non-native conifers and replace with a mix of native broadleaved trees, thus enhancing the wildlife value of the reserve.

Cattle were brought onto Petershill, near Bathgate, for the first time in January for several months and then returned in October. The grazing has been greatly aided by a group of enthusiastic volunteers living nearby who have carried out the required daily checks on the cattle for the Trust. We are very grateful to all of them for their enthusiasm.

After a complicated set of negotiations linked to an adjacent wind farm development, the Trust has now acquired an extension to our Linn Dean reserve. The existing Linn Dean Reserve is located along Linn Dean Water, just off the A68 at Soutra, and the 10 hectare extension is to the north on the steep slopes of the Linn Dean.

With thanks: After many years as Convenor at Milkhall Pond, Neville Crowther was finally able to retire and we welcome Pete Sykes as his replacement. Many thanks to Neville for his sterling work over many years. We also welcome Nick Warren who has taken over as Convenor at Johnston Terrace Wildlife Garden, a post which had been vacant for some time.

**Fundraising** for the Lothian Group continues to be very largely done by our supermarket can collections. As you will see in the accounts the sum raised has substantially increased from £4180.90 last year to £5732.20 in this year.

This is very gratifying and is largely due to the hard work of our fund raising secretary Barbara and the many individual volunteers who help at collections.

At the end of 2019 several of our regular collectors advised they were unable to continue and it became clear that we would struggle to have enough volunteers for the can collections in 2020. HQ sent out an appeal for additional volunteers on our behalf to Lothian members who had indicated interest in volunteering which proved successful well beyond our expectations. Despite this we are always looking for more volunteers.

### **Finance**

Our treasurer, Trevor, prepared the group accounts for this year and these can be found in the accompanying document.

As a result of our incomes and savings, we have been able to make a contribution of £2000 towards the purchase of a hay baler by HQ. We have also helped to pay for some interpretation boards to be erected at Wardie Bay as part of our involvement in the Edinburgh Foreshore initiative. Because at the end of the year we still had substantial general funds we decided that we could also reinstate our previous practice, at least for this year, of making an unrestricted donation to HQ of £1000.

### **Proposed Committee Members for the next year**

There are few proposed changes to the committee this year. As mentioned above, Nick Warren has volunteered to become chair of this group. Allan Mathieson will continue to convene the activities of the sub-committee, and Peter Sykes will be chairing the reserve management group.

We would like to express our thanks to the members of both committees for all their hard work.

**Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or wish to join us.**