



**Scottish
Wildlife
Trust**

Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust: Lothians Group Newsletter

Dates for your Diary 2020/2021

Enjoy our talks online!

Until current restrictions are eased, we will be hosting our popular winter talks programme online. They are free of charge and will take place via Zoom.

To book: before each talk, an email will be sent to everyone on our mailing list with booking information.

To add yourself to the mailing list: go to the SWT website at scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/local-group/lothian/

Once on the [SWT Lothians Local Group homepage](#), go to the bottom of the page and click on the 'Subscribe Now' button. On the [sign-up page](#), simply pick 'Lothians' from the 'Region' list.

You will then be emailed up-to-date information about all future talks and events.

Full details of the talks programme is online at swtlothians.org.uk/events

Book here at scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-events/



News from Lothian Reserves

by Julian Warman, SWT Reserve Manager

Footfall increased on reserves during the lockdown as more people sought and used their local green spaces. There was greater demand from Nursery and Youth groups to use Johnston Terrace and Bawsinch reserves, as many are unable to access their usual sites. Social distancing rules meant that we had to introduce a booking system at Johnston Terrace for the first time!

Thankfully, Lothian Reserves have not experienced the big increase in anti-social behaviour observed elsewhere. However, activities on reserves continue to be impacted by Covid-19 as there has been a reduced number of volunteers, and all of the European volunteers left in March. Vehicle-sharing restrictions will undoubtedly mean a much-reduced work force for the foreseeable future. As a consequence, grassland management will be scaled back this year, as cutting and raking is labour intensive. We will not cut some sites (especially those which get some grazing) and the areas cut on others might be reduced.

Petershill reserve: The rebuilding of the wall is complete and, once we reinstall the kissing gate, it will be stock-proof again for the return of the Shetland Cattle. If you live near Bathgate, we are still looking for 'Cattle Lookers' to check them at Petershill on Saturdays and Sundays. For details visit: scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteering/volunteer-cattle-checker

Emergency Covid-19 appeal: In these unprecedented times, loss of income to Scottish Wildlife Trust is limiting our ongoing work for wildlife. Please consider supporting us through this: scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/how-to-help/make-a-donation/appeals/
Thank you.

Looking for your best shots!

Are you a budding photographer? Would you like to help promote the SWT wildlife and reserves by sharing some of your fabulous photos with us?

One of the aims of the SWT Lothians local group is to promote our reserves, and using photos is a great way to do this. With this in mind, we have started to do more on social media (see below).

You can help us by contributing your photos of the reserves and their wildlife throughout the year.

They will be gratefully received!

Get in touch to find out more: editor@swtlothians.org.uk

New social media

Thanks to Ruth and Jo, who answered our call for help in the last issue of Lothian talk, the Lothians Group have a growing online presence! We still need someone to help with Instagram, so please get in touch with the editor if you are interested.



Visit our new Lothians Group Facebook page for all the latest news, events and information:

www.facebook.com/swtlothians

or find us on Instagram at @swtlothians

Chair's note

Greetings and I hope that this newsletter finds you well.

Autumn is with us, and I now walk through fallen leaves as I take my children to school. Large numbers of pink-footed geese have arrived, their flight calls making me lift my head up from my daily business. Welcome back.

We finally managed to hold this group's AGM on 17th September (it had initially been scheduled to take place in April). It was our first online public meeting and thanks go to everyone who joined it.

Because of social distancing rules, our winter talks series have also moved online. We hope that you will be able to join us online on Thursday 17th December from 7.30pm to listen to our guest speaker Dr Sam Collins' talk about Marine Protected Areas around Scotland and the Trust's own Living Seas programme.

I wish us all good weather so that we can keep enjoying the outdoors.

Nick Warren, Chair

Planning Matters, September 2020

Midlothian

Calderstane House, Hillend: A proposal has been made for a hotel and self-catering units within this significant piece of woodland adjoining Hillend Country Park. The developer is planting additional trees as part of the project, but the development involves demolishing the existing house and expanding the buildings within this pocket of woodland. However although planning is still to be decided, the Scottish Office Roads team are not happy with the development as it involves a junction with the trunk road at this tricky junction.

Climate Change: In August, Midlothian Council agreed a Climate Change Action plan and strategy (following declaring a Climate Change emergency last year). Malcolm Spaven, Chair of the Climate Emergency group, arranged a meeting of that group, and set up an Agriculture and Land Use group. If anyone wishes to represent SWT on either of these groups, please contact Tim Duffy (below).

East Lothian

Climate Change: East Lothian council invited us to a consultation meeting entitled 'ClimateEvolution: a vision for a place-based transition to climate resilience in East Lothian'. This was, "an overall [climate change resilient] vision" for the future development and use of land in and around: Tranent, Prestonpans, Cockenzie/Port Seton, Macmerry and Longniddry, Blindwells new settlement, & the former Cockenzie Power Station.

If any members in this area are interested in this 'not a fixed masterplan', the council are very keen on local involvement in this local planning process. As it is very climate change and environment (including wildlife habitat) friendly, it is a process to be commended in our view. You can find the relevant documents here: eastlothianconsultations.co.uk/housing-environment/climateevolution/

The Seagreen 2 Offshore Wind Farm is in early stages of development and SSE as developers are scoping out where the onshore infrastructure will be built. No details are available but there are ecological studies of the coastline around Thornton Glen Reserve, south of Dunbar.

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Planning Matters, September 2020 (continued)

West Lothian

Developments associated with the Winchburgh Mega-development

These are detailed applications that fall within the already approved Winchburgh “New Town” masterplan. The three developments relate to a new slip road from the M9 to the centre of Winchburgh.

The northern end (the motorway junction) is immediately adjacent to the Burns Craig Wood and Bales Muir Local Biodiversity Site (LBS). However, the LBS is separated from the development by the C-road from Duntarvie to South Queensferry, so will presumably be unaffected.

The southern end will run directly east-west through a triangle of scrub, which forms the northern part of the Winchburgh Clay Quarry Pond pLBS (candidate or potential Local Biodiversity Site). Given that there seems to be a secondary road that will also run north-south through the scrub triangle, there is no doubt that this part of the pLBS will therefore be written off. The proposed route also runs east-west through part of Canal Wood LBS, although there are few trees in this area so there may be little loss.

Given the scale of the Winchburgh development, as well as the advanced nature of the project and the fact that all of the major elements of the plan have already been approved, we believe that there is little mileage in trying to object to this detailed proposal. Our judgement is that the overall impact is unlikely to be significant on the LBS. We suspect that the pLBS is already likely to be compromised by the ongoing developments round about it.

Our greater concern is that, once again, a development proposal is being made without any reference to the presence of LBS/pLBS in the vicinity. There are two ecological appraisals, one for the north and one for the south. The northern appraisal, as part of its methodology, describes the need to take into account regional, county and local biodiversity interest and locally important non-statutory sites. It describes how it has sought species information from the Wildlife Information Centre (holder of the LBS & pLBS information for West Lothian). However, there is no mention whatsoever of the adjacent LBS – even though potential impacts on SSSIs up to 8km away are mentioned. The southern appraisal has no mention of the need to consider local biodiversity interests, and no mention of the existence of, and impact on, the LBS/pLBS.

There is something going wrong in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) methodology in West Lothian. Perhaps the EIA's submitted are being approved by the council without checking that the local planning policy protected LBSs are included? On paper, West Lothian council has some of other best visible policies for getting developers to do appropriate pre-planning application biodiversity information collection. However, LBSs seem to be missing too often for it to be an occasional lapse and we will bring this up with the council.

New distillery at Midhope Castle: This development is one of the few that *does* mention an adjacent LBS – Wester Shore Wood – in its habitat survey. A very small part of the overall development boundary encroaches on a very small part of the southern edge of the LBS. Given that this small area is well within the proximity of existing buildings and an access track, we think that it is already likely to be disturbed. The development plan does not indicate any effect on existing woodland, and so our judgement is that there will be no impact on the LBS.

Pre-application notifications

There have been three of these, none of which have any documentation at this stage. Two refer to proposed windfarm developments at Woodmuir and Camilty Plantations. The headwaters of the Harwood Burn LBS are to the east of the former, and a (very narrow) corridor of the Crosswood Burn runs through the latter, so we may need to keep an eye on the applications when they are submitted. The third is for a very large expansion of storage warehouses for the Glen Turner distillery at Starlaw, south east of Blackburn. Easter Inch Moss / Seafield Law LBS is immediately adjacent to the distillery as it currently stands, while Tailend Moss SSSI / Reserve is immediately to the north, across the A779. The only information that is included in the application is that there will be footbridges across the A779 and across the cycle route N75, which runs through the LBS. Therefore, there is a real potential for impact on Tailend Moss and Easter Inch Moss / Seafield Law. We will certainly need to keep a close eye on this one.

City of Edinburgh Council

The annual CEC Local Biodiversity Site Steering Group has met to assess and designate / re-designate 7 more sites in the City area: Black Springs, Bonaly Reservoir, Brunstane Burn, Hallyards Wood, Hopetoun Road, Linn Mill Burn, Threipmuir Reservoir. Another LBS, Braid Burn, has been (botanically) surveyed for the council by SWT volunteers to help the council keep up with the re-surveys required every 10 years.

If any members reading this would like to help survey such sites please contact Tim Duffy on timrduffy1@gmail.com

Contacts For Planning Matters Affecting Wildlife Sites

Midlothian / East Lothian: Susan Manson - mansons@castlesteads.net

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

City of Edinburgh Council: Planning Representative (volunteer) Ian Whittaker - ianw0@yahoo.co.uk

Dr Tim Duffy, SWT Lothians Planning Secretary: timrduffy1@gmail.com

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (registered no. 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).

If you have anything you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please get in touch via editor@swtlothians.org.uk