



**Scottish  
Wildlife  
Trust**

# Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust: Lothians Group Newsletter

## Dates for your Diary 2021

### Open Day: **Celebrate International Bog Day at Red Moss of Balerno**

- Sun 25th July; 12pm-5pm
- To attend, book via the SWT events webpage at [scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/things-to-do/wildlife-events/](https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/things-to-do/wildlife-events/)

### Online Talk: **Environmental Policy and Climate change in Scotland**

- Thurs 21st Oct; 7.30pm-9pm
- Dougie Peedle, SWT

### Online Talk: **Lothians Reserves**

- Thurs 16th Dec; 7.30pm-9pm
- Various SWT reserves rangers

**To book onto a talk** go to: [scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-events/](https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-events/)

**Don't miss out!** Before each talk, an email is sent to everyone on our mailing list. To add yourself to the mailing list, go to the SWT website. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click the 'Subscribe Now' button: [scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/local-group/lothian/](https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/local-group/lothian/)

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

**Full details of our programme can be found at [swtlothians.org.uk/events](https://swtlothians.org.uk/events)**



*Water shrew in Duddingston Loch, by James Hopkins*

## Chair's note *by Nick Warren*

Greetings and I hope this newsletter finds you well.

I don't know how many of you picked up on a recently published HM Treasury's report on Biodiversity called the Dasgupta Review but I found it was significant to have the treasury finally engage with this issue with this impressive report looking at how nature underpins everything we do.

Hopefully with this greater recognition, we will see a step-change in governments' response to our environmental crisis. Of course, the world will be turning its attention to Glasgow when world leaders come to discuss climate change but one should not forget the other big international conversations talking about biodiversity in Kunming China in October. A big year for nature and our future it seems.

From our Lothians perspective, this may seem of little relevance, but it does matter as many things interlink with one another.

Our AGM took place online on the 22nd of April. Thanks to the promise of a fascinating talk on bird migration by Stan da Prato after the AGM, it was well attended. Given the Covid-19 situation, we are not yet able to organise outdoor events, but our Zoom talks continue to be popular for which we thank our great speakers and attendees.

After our coldest spring for 60 years, and as many of us plan to holiday in the UK this summer, I wish us all the best of summer.



## Wildlife wonders!

Thank you again to everyone who has been sending us photographs taken on SWT Lothians nature reserves! The photograph above is of ragged-robin flowers, taken by Peter Kane at Bawsinch NNR.

Other people have uploaded them onto our Facebook and Instagram pages, such as the water shrew overleaf. More of these wonderful photographs on the following pages.

Do you love taking photographs of nature? Would you like to help to inspire others about their local wildlife and SWT reserves by sharing some of your fabulous photos with us? One of the aims of the SWT Lothians group is to promote our reserves, and using photos is a great way to do this.

You could help us by contributing your photos of SWT reserves and their wildlife throughout the year. Contact Jo Young at [jo@dunadd.co.uk](mailto:jo@dunadd.co.uk)

Visit our Lothians Group **Facebook** page:

[www.facebook.com/swtlothians](https://www.facebook.com/swtlothians)

or **Instagram** at @swtlothians

## Swift Awareness Week in Edinburgh

The Swift City project is aiming to make Edinburgh a sanctuary for Swifts by recording sightings of 'screaming parties' and nesting, and by asking people to help provide them with more places to nest.

Swift populations are in steep decline, and the species is now on the Amber list for conservation status. Find out more about this on the [RSPB blog post](#) about making Edinburgh a Swift sanctuary.

You can also join in with [International Swift Awareness Week from 3rd – 11th July 2021](#). During that week in Edinburgh, there will be self-led cycle and walking paths running throughout the city. All routes will be signposted during this time. There will be four cycle routes & two walking routes that link up swift murals, spots to do a swift survey, swift hubs & swift streets!

### Swift Mapper project

Following the wonderful talk for Lothian group members in May, 'Return of the Swifts' by RSPB Scotland's Katie O'Neill, we wanted to let you know how you could help the swifts!

Find out how to take part in the Swift Mapper project at [www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/conservation-and-sustainability/safeguarding-species/swiftmapper/](http://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/conservation-and-sustainability/safeguarding-species/swiftmapper/)

## Esk Valley Trust

The River Esk flows from its source in the Pentland Hills to the sea at Musselburgh. In 2001, the Esk Valley Trust was formed to care for and promote this area. This includes the SWT reserve of Hewan Wood, which will be undergoing a survey to establish if it meets the criteria for a Local Biodiversity Site designation (see 'Planning Matters' section of this newsletter).

Alongside their active management of sites to balance environmental and amenity values, the Esk Valley Trust also organise events and talks. Future online talks include, 'The Esk valleys: working with nature for a better future' (26th Aug) and 'Artists and Photographers along the river Esk' (8th Oct).

Find out more about the Esk Valley Trust, and their full event & talks programme at:

[www.eskvalleytrust.org](http://www.eskvalleytrust.org)

If you have anything you would like to contribute to a future edition of Lothian Talk, please get in touch with Kate Walters via email at [editor@swtlothians.org.uk](mailto:editor@swtlothians.org.uk)



*Long-tailed tit by D. King*



*Roe Deer by Peter Kane*

### *Your local nature*

Here are some photos our members have shared with us recently, coincidentally all taken at Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch NNR.

You can see more our social media pages, or you can share some of your own photos of local nature, and local nature reserves!



*Common Darter Dragonfly by Peter Kane*



*Fabulous fungi by Peter Kane*



*Buzzard by D. King*

# Planning Matters

May 2021

## Midlothian

Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS): A meeting of the Steering Group for Local Biodiversity Sites was held in February. Three sites were confirmed as LBS. These sites have been LBS for some time but each site is reviewed and new surveys initiated in order to confirm it still meets the criteria for a LBS. All the ground work and survey work is coordinated by TWIC. The three sites are:

- Rosebery Reservoir and part of River South Esk
- Sheil Burn Wood
- Black Springs (Pentland Hills)

Hewan Wood, owned by the Esk Valley Trust, is just downstream of Roslin. The site is interesting as an area of woodland largely undisturbed. The wood will be credited a potential Local Biodiversity Site, until a full survey is undertaken to inform the decision whether it meets the criteria for a LBS.

## East Lothian

East Lothian Council has just appointed a new Head of Development, which includes planning. She is Michaela Sullivan, previously with Cala Homes but she has also worked within the Scottish Government as Assistant Chief Planner. While we have a very good relationship with Midlothian, West Lothian and City of Edinburgh planning departments, East Lothian Council has recently been less forthcoming with information on planning and biodiversity matters, so it will be interesting to see how the department may now change.

The application for an onshore substation and underground electricity cables at the site of the former Cockenzie Power Station is now with East Lothian Council. The offshore Seagreen Wind Farm propose to export some of the electricity to this site for onward transmission into the existing transmission infrastructure. This means that there will be some disturbance to the coast line while construction is ongoing. The environmental statement promises 'trenchless installation' and the presence of an ecological expert to oversee the works. One cable will come ashore just west of Cockenzie harbour and cross the road to the substation which is largely on the site of the former power station.

Site designation key	
LBS	Local Biodiversity Site
pLBS	potential Local Biodiversity Site
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SPA	Special Protection Area
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
Ramsar Site	Wetland site of International importance

## West Lothian

Dr Cameron Easton has joined the Boghead Burn biodiversity rehabilitation project working group for SWT. We will be collaborating with the Forth River Trust and the West Lothian Council on plans for creation and management of both green and blue networks, the site being in close proximity to both Little Boghead LBS/Nature Park and the Bogburn flood lagoons.

Four new locations in West Lothian have been unanimously approved as LBSs. These are Barbauchlaw Burn - Bridge Castle to River Avon, Belsyde Wood, Easter Redburn Moss, and Hall Torbane Farm Ponds.

Planning applications continue to be numerous and we have noticed an increase in large scale projects, be they industrial or residential.

As mentioned in a previous edition of this newsletter, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) sometimes does not mention of the existence of, and impact on, the LBS/pLBS. A main focus has continued to be the highlighting the close proximity of developments to such sites that need special considerations. We have been working alongside the West Lothian Council Ranger Service to rectify this.

At the same time it is reassuring to see that some applications for multiple housing developments found in close proximity to LBS include buffer zones and mitigating measures to minimise the impact of the development on wildlife connectivity.

Planning applications with possible impact on LBS

- Erection of 24 flats at The Firs, Langside Gardens, Polbeth – a matter of concern was the omission from the developer of the fact that the site was not only adjacent to, but also included part of, the Limefield Glen & Harwood Water to Gavieside Bridge LBS. Our consultation rectified the omission and included notable recommendations given the impact it would have on the blue and green corridor - *proposal subsequently withdrawn*.
- Erection of 40 houses on Pumpherston Road, Uphall Station, West Lothian. The development is adjacent to Drumshoreland LBS. This was an instance where the developer acknowledged their proximity to the LBS and even included a limitation area for habitat belonging to the great-crested newt. This on its own does not mitigate for all possible effects of the development. As the developer was not required to submit an environmental impact report, comments from the Rangers services and the SWT offer recommendations to minimise the damaging effects in local biodiversity and Drumshoreland LBS - *awaiting decision*.
- Erection of 22 maturation warehouses south of Glen Turner Distillery. The expansion of the distillery has been something that we have been following closely since last year. The warehouses would be adjacent to Easter Inch Moss and Seafield Law LBS, to the south and east. Documentation from the developer relating to biodiversity assessments and recommendations are comprehensive, given the size and potential damaging impact of the development. They include a bat survey, tree survey and a preliminary ecological appraisal that acknowledges the presence and significance of the LBS. Our response alongside the ranger services highlights the important species and habitats that need to be safeguarded - *awaiting decision*.

Preliminary applications/notices

- Consultation for 50MW wind farm, comprising of up to 14 wind turbines, located north-east of the Forth, West Lothian & South Lanarkshire (middle of the distance between south of Breich and north-east of Rootpark). Because of the size of the wind farm, according to Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 approval must be granted by Scottish ministers. The site, though in a rural area, is not in any proximity to any LBS - *awaiting decision*.

- An 8 hectare residential development at Oakbank Road, East Calder, located adjacent to the Calderwood SSSI. This SSSI is the largest recorded ancient woodland site in West Lothian. It contains two ponds which are breeding sites for great-crested newts (protected by law), as well as the second largest area of valley fen in West Lothian (where the Linhouse Valley oxbow lakes used to be). The plans proposed by the developer show the intention to safeguard the SSSI by designating the location nearest to it, and Linhouse Water, as greenspace/parkland, and further recommendations were made that would allow a possible enhancement of biodiversity on the southern side of Linhouse Water. If special care is taken, we do not expect significant impacts on the SSSI - *awaiting decision*.
- A 58/108 hectare mixed use development at Drumshoreland Garden community land, north of Old Clapperton Hall, East Calder. Two separate applications in principle were received from the same developer, the latter of 108 hectare encompasses the area of the 58 hectare one. They include part of the ancient woodland located to the north. Submitted plans show intention to leave the woodland area unaltered. The southern boundary adjacent to Almondell Country Park features a green connectivity corridor, buffer zone and new woodland plantations. If these plans together with overall green landscaping practices are followed we do not expect the development to have significant impact on local biodiversity - *awaiting decision*.

After 10+ years as enthusiastic and expert Planning representative/LBS committee member for West Lothian, Dr. Cameron Easton has decided to retire from these volunteer roles this summer and is well on his way to handing over to the new volunteer Carmina Cazan (currently acting secretary of the Lothians Group). Dr. Easton will continue to support Carmina with local knowledge and experience. We cannot thank Cameron enough for the work he has done, and West Lothian Council staff say the same thing with bells on!

### City of Edinburgh Council

As reported in the last issue we have been working hard to support SWT staff in developing an Ecological Coherence Plan (ECP) for Edinburgh, along with an impressively wide number of councils, as well as environmental management and conservation-minded organisations – both professional and voluntary. We have now got to the stage, with model outputs becoming available, that we have started modelling in Edinburgh where we should be doing ECP 'on the ground' projects (projects that will both boost habitats or species where the ECP has shown they are lacking or where existing ecological networks could be expanded). Accordingly we have been using available datasets to identify where these areas overlap geographically with areas of the city where the population does not have access to natural or semi-natural greenspaces (i.e. open areas with true biodiversity elements). This is line with the long standing SWT policy that every citizen should have access to such biodiverse areas within 300m of their residence as the crow flies, or 400m actual walking distance following safe paths, roughly equating to a 10-minute neighbourhood walk (or 20 minutes with a toddler...). You can see that policy [here](#) ([pdf download](#)).

#### Contacts For Planning Matters Affecting Wildlife Sites

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