

Ayrshire Newsletter

Spring and Summer 2023

Hi everyone,

As this is the first Scottish Wildlife Trust Ayrshire Newsletter for some considerable time a warm welcome to all Ayrshire Scottish Wildlife Trust members from the local members group.

The newsletter highlights some of the activities taking place within Ayrshire and as this is Volunteering Week, the main emphasis is on the volunteering opportunities and activities with the Trust within Ayrshire.

Volunteering In Ayrshire

Following on from the recent articles in the March edition of the Trust Magazine regarding volunteering for the trust and the types of roles there is, in particular, with reference to the section on the Ayrshire volunteer groups organised by Harry Richards, Ayrshire Community Engagement Officer, there are activities taking place outdoors weekly on Wednesdays and Thursdays across the reserves and also monthly to help local communities.

Ayrshire members may be interested in other 'indoor' volunteering possibilities which are as instrumental in furthering the objects of the Trust. These include statutory planning casework (see the Conservation Group report below), helping with winter talks, attending related events ; fund raising and creating publications such as the attached newsletter. These are the remit of the local members group and its committee.

The Ayrshire members group is one of the longest established and as with many groups, is needing new members to bring fresh ideas and skills to assist in achieving the Trust's objectives.

It is a very good way to learn new skills and contribute in a way that can deliver as much sense of achievement as physical work on a reserve and open to everyone.

If you are interested in being part of the local group committee, please contact the group by emailing swtaylorshire@gmail.com and more details are on the [volunteering opportunities facebook page](#)



Tree tube maintenance at Shewalton Woods reserve

OTHER THINGS TO DO THIS SEASON

Spring & Summer Events Program 2023

These events are open to members and non-members and are free though booking is advisable. All on Saturdays, times TBC but likely all to be 12noon - 2pm or 1pm - 3pm except the evening Bat/Moth night in September.



Guided walk through Shewalton Woods Reserve

June 24th - Nature reclaiming Industry Guided Walk at Knockshinnoch Lagoons

July 15th - Big Butterfly Count at Gales Marsh

August 12th - Wildflower and Insect Photography Workshop at Gales Marsh

September 9th - Bat & Moth Guided Walk venue TBC possibly Lawthorn/Sourlie if construction work allows

More information can be found on our [local facebook page](#) or [Ayrshire members page](#)

OTHER NEWS

Conservation Group Report

The Conservation Group continues to keep an eye on proposed developments in Ayrshire. One recent success, though only by the narrowest of margins, concerns the old Barony colliery between Ochiltree and Auchinleck. For those who do not know the site and its landmark A-frame which held the winding gear, the bing has been re-wilding for over 30 years since mining ceased. It is now developing into a wonderful mosaic of woodland and open grassland with some very special species including Bee Orchid and Yellow Bird's-nest, and Grayling and Dingy Skipper butterflies. Recently a group of investors proposed converting the site into an "Eco-Wellness Park" with about 300 accommodation units, hotel, spa, yoga area etc etc. Along with other wildlife groups we objected, and many objections were also sent in by Trust members. Thankfully, the planning application was recently rejected by East Ayrshire Council – but only by the casting vote of the provost! This is probably not the end of this story so we may need your help again if a new application is submitted.

Before Christmas, again working with other groups and local naturalists, we sent a detailed case to NatureScot to designate the Garnock estuary, including the Ardeer peninsula, as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The evidence we submitted showed very clearly that much of the site is of SSSI quality and should be designated now. NS is now looking at the case, and there is hope that arguably North Ayrshire's finest wildlife area could soon have some protection from harmful developments (and everlasting sand extraction operations).

As with many areas, Ayrshire is seeing a number of new forestry proposals, many connected with carbon offsetting. We have recently received early stage consultations for projects in Eglinton and Kelburn CPs. It is good to be able to make our comments early in the planning stage so that local biodiversity can be protected, and perhaps even enhanced. We are also now monitoring forestry grant applications in Ayrshire.

In addition to these higher profile cases the Conservation Group monitors planning applications from across the three Ayrshire council areas to see which may have an adverse impact on wildlife and to see if we can suggest suitable mitigation measures. If anyone has concerns about planning applications in their local area they should contact the Secretary who will pass them on to the Planning Group.

Ayrshire Reserve News Spring 2023

The 15 Ayrshire reserves are bursting into life and well worth a visit. You can find out where they are and what they have to offer at [Our wildlife reserves | Scottish Wildlife Trust](#)

At Ayr Gorge Woodlands, you will see some recent step repairs carried out by the Wednesday

Weekday Volunteers lead by our Community Engagement Officer, Harry Richards. You might also encounter some large forestry machinery dealing with diseased larch trees. It's a shock to lose a large block of trees in one go but the benefit will be that native trees should quickly germinate and fill the gap. The sand martins have returned to Gales Marsh to discover their accommodation has been extended. Our Reserves Project Officer, Sandy Waddell, built the original 48 nest box structure in 2020. It was so successful that we had him add a further 52. We are expecting to significantly beat last year's total of 263 chicks. 553 birds have been ringed so far.

From its name, you'd think Knockshinnoch Lagoons was a birdie site. It is but it has so much all-round interest that you can go there anytime and see something interesting. The footpaths take you round an old mining spoil heap where wildflowers and insects do very well indeed. Look out for green hairstreak and dingy skipper butterflies and let me know if you see one.

Harry, Sandy and the volunteers are responsible for all the maintenance, habitat management and access work on the reserves. Part of Harry's remit is also to support some communities with wildlife improvements on their patch.



Establishing a bee hotel at Gales Marsh reserve

Hopefully you might have heard of the **Irvine to Girvan Nectar Network**. This is a project that we are delivering to put pollinator-friendly habitat in the gaps between the reserves and other good sites so that these insects can spread and thrive. It is co-ordinated by Lynne Bates who is encouraging communities, landowners and local authorities to create flower-rich sites wherever possible along the coastal strip between Irvine and Girvan. The Ayrshire Coastal Path group is a partner that has created and is managing several Nectar Network sites. We helped them design and install the colourful wildlife information panels placed along the route.

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Scottish Wildlife Trust Ayrshire Group eNewsletter

This will be circulated to members several times annually. If you have not receive it, but would like to, or if your email address has changed since you joined the Trust, please contact SWTNewsletter@gmail.com

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (registered number SC040247) having its registered office at Harbourside House, 110 Commercial Street, Edinburgh EH6 6NF. It is also a Scottish registered charity (charity number SC005792).