



**Scottish
Wildlife
Trust**

Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust: Lothians Group Newsletter

Dates for your Diary

Online Talk: **Running a pro-nature business with wildflower meadows**

- Thurs 18 Nov; 7.30pm-9pm
- Dr Sally Gouldstone

Online Talk: **A walk through SWT Lothians reserves**

- Thurs 16 Dec; 7.30pm-9pm
- Julian Warman, SWT Reserve Manager, and reserve convenors

Online Talk: **Studying and photographing seals and seabirds**

- Thurs 17 Feb; 7.30pm-9pm
- Dr John Dickens

Online Talk: **Scottish lichens**

- Thurs 17 March; 7.30pm-9pm
- Dr. Rebecca Yahr, Edinburgh Botanics

To book onto a talk go to:
scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-events/

Full details of the talks programme can be found online at swtlothians.org.uk/events

Lothians Group **Facebook** page:

www.facebook.com/swtlothians

and **Instagram** at [@swtlothians](https://www.instagram.com/swtlothians)



'Leith Walk on the wild side' by Sarah Hannis

Planning Edinburgh's green future *by Nick Warren*

Urban green and blue spaces are recognised as having a vital role to play in improving urban dwellers' lives this century.

The city of Edinburgh is blessed with great parks, green spaces, shoreline, rivers, and lochs that are greatly valued by inhabitants and visitors alike. But what should the future of these areas be, and how could they help connect people and nature?

These questions are being explored by the Scottish Wildlife Trust in many ways, illustrated here by two current initiatives:

Edinburgh's Thriving Green Spaces

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a partner of Edinburgh's Thriving Green Spaces, a project creating a new vision for the city's green and blue spaces.

The Trust is leading Edinburgh's Nature Network, a project that provides a strategic approach to prioritising environmental and nature-based solutions to tackle the threats of climate change and biodiversity loss in the city. It focuses on identifying well-connected, healthy, resilient natural habitats within the city which will support Edinburgh's wildlife and people.

Edinburgh's Nature Network is looking to influence the future development of Edinburgh, and provide a robust evidence base from which to make better informed decisions in the city. The project is funded by the Future Parks Accelerator and brings together the City of Edinburgh Council, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Greenspace Scotland, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust, University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh Green Spaces Forum.

Convenor retireals

Our very experienced reserve convenor, Ken Knowles, retired from our group this month, and received the Trust's [Lifetime Achievement Award](#) for his years of dedicated volunteering.

Ken cared for Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch reserve, as well as being the valued Chair of our Lothians Group for many years.

He made so many things work for this group & will be greatly missed.

N. Warren (Chair)

At the end of 2020, two experienced reserve convenors in East Lothian also retired: Bob Wilson and Glen Gibb.

Bob had looked after Thornton Glen for over 25 years, with help from Bob Smith, the SWT teams and other volunteers when necessary. Log-jams were removed to stop flooding upstream, and trees planted. The path to Innerwick Castle and a small circular path by the river were maintained. He became a regular SWT volunteer on other reserves. For the past two years he has worked with Kevan Jamieson, who is now taking over as convenor.

Glen took over from the previous convenor in 2010. He organised times for volunteers to work in the reserve, and, like Bob, helped in other reserves when he could. Tree planting, clearance of brambles, pathwork, installation of bird boxes and general maintenance kept the reserve in good shape. During the last 2-years, felling and re-planting with Scottish native trees have taken place so one area has a completely new look.

Both Glen and Bob, will be sorely missed.

L. Fairweather

[cont.] If you want to learn more about this initiative, we invite you to go and visit the project website: www.thrivinggreenspaces.scot/

Six predictions of Edinburgh's future green spaces

Over the summer, the Trust partnered with the British Ecological Society and six local artists to expand our horizons as to what Edinburgh Green Spaces could look like. One of these artistic representations, 'Leith Walk on the Wild Side' by Sarah Hannis (www.sarahhannis.com) in collaboration with Donya Davidson (SWT Ecologist), can be seen at the start of this article.

This virtual expedition, part of Edinburgh Science Festival 2021, can be seen at: artspaces.kunstmatrix.com/en/exhibition/6703677/bes-six-predictions-of-edinburghs-future-green-spaces

Goosey Gander!

Pink-footed Geese start to arrive at Aberlady Bay, East Lothian, around the second week of September. Numbers usually peak in October - up to 20,000 birds have been counted in recent years - and then start to drop off, with most birds heading south to overwinter in Lancashire and East Anglia. With the mild weather this autumn, they may stay a little longer.

The geese feed on local fields during the day and return to Aberlady Bay to roost, often arriving in huge skeins and filling the air with their evocative calls as they 'whiffle' down to land on the mudflats. Dusk is a good time to witness the spectacle, though the exact timing can never be predicted; if there's a clear sky and a full moon, they may stay out feeding later than on a cloudy evening. The direction from which they come can also vary, depending on which fields they've spent the day on.

There are a couple of good spots to stand and watch.

The first is at the wooden bridge at the entrance to Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve, half a mile east of Aberlady along the A198. The other is along the little road leading to Kilspindie Golf Course, accessible at the west end of the green in Aberlady village. A small car park at the end of the road, on the right hand side, offers views over the bay. Both sites are also good for watching other species such as waders and ducks. It can get quite cold standing around waiting for the geese to arrive, so warm clothes are advisable, and take some binoculars if you have any!

Kathryn Cox, Membership Officer, Scottish Ornithologists' Club

Volunteer with Lothians Group!

The Lothians Group membership subcommittee is looking for volunteers to assist with its running. Anyone willing to assist with arranging/hosting meetings and events, or contacting speakers, should contact Allan Mathieson on 01314478389 or by e-mail to chair@swtlothians.org.uk



Bumblebee on Purple loosestrife by J. Doake



Gannets at Bass Rock by D. King

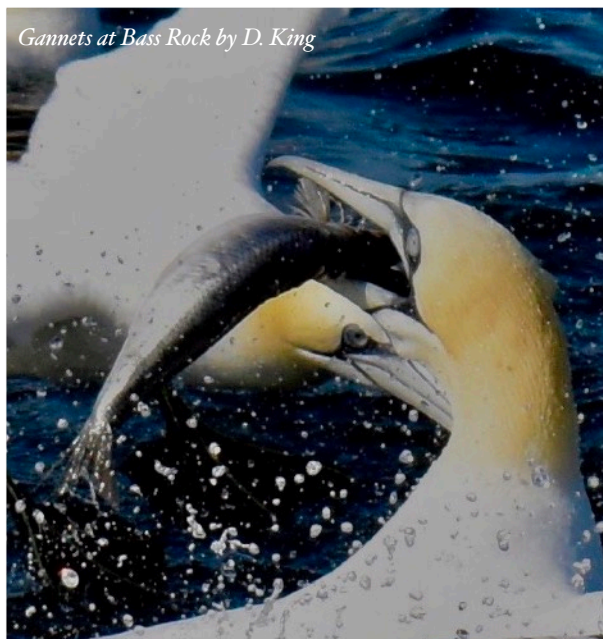
Your local nature

Here are a selection of the photographs members have shared with us since our last edition, taken on various reserves and wild places.

You can see more [our social media pages](#). You can also share some of your own photos of local nature, and local nature reserves!



Bass Rock by D. King



Gannets at Bass Rock by D. King



Wild carrot (aka Queen Anne's Lace) by K. Cox

Planning Matters

October 2021

Midlothian

Anyone visiting or living in Midlothian will have noticed a huge amount of development, particularly around Danderhall and Millerhill. This is part of a long-term development around Shawfair Park, and includes both housing and land for economic development. Most of the development is in the current Midlothian Local Development Plan and has been agreed. There is very little anyone can do now to influence or change it apart from hoping that the landscaping is sufficient, and many of the native species and existing habitats are protected. A recent application for a District Heating Scheme may impact on the remaining rough land around the Millerhill Marshalling Yards. Some more research is required.

The other area of Midlothian currently undergoing development is the A701 corridor from Straiton to Penicuik. This area has changed out of all recognition in the last 20 years. As part of the ongoing development, Midlothian Council has appointed a team to look at options for the so called 'A701 Relief Road' and 'A702 Land Road'. There is information on the Midlothian Council website under Current Consultations and a dedicated website at www.a701reliefroad.co.uk

For now, the team are seeking comments and looking to develop a final route option. This final route will be the subject of a planning application. Those of us with long memories will recall the protests that accompanied the plans for a dual carriageway along A701. Currently, it looks as if the proposed route will avoid the Bilston Glen area.

The Sheriffhall roundabout is still in line for improvement although the original deadline has passed. Money has been found and the Scottish Government has committed to investing in the city bypass, and providing grade-separated junctions at Sheriffhall. There is no date for the works to begin. One of the local benefits will be links for cycling and walking, to and from Edinburgh and Shawfair, currently blocked by the bypass. The original plans had some new habitat creation as part of the realignment of roads, and included some ponds and wetland.

The latest planning lists (October) indicate yet another proposed development at Straiton (adjacent to the Park & Ride). This land is farmland just now but has been the subject of many applications over the years. The application is seeking guidance for an Environment Impact Assessment. Although there are no Local Biodiversity Sites, or indeed any statutory sites on or near the application site, it is a piece of land that has thrived on neglect and there is some useful rough grassland and scrubby habitat (Straiton Pond LBS is some distance away, separated by a dual carriageway and a major junction). You can usually see a roe deer or two when going along the bypass. The proposal is for 'mixed use', including a hotel and recreational facilities. Most of the site is allocated within the Local Plan for development so it is likely the site will be developed at some stage.

West Lothian

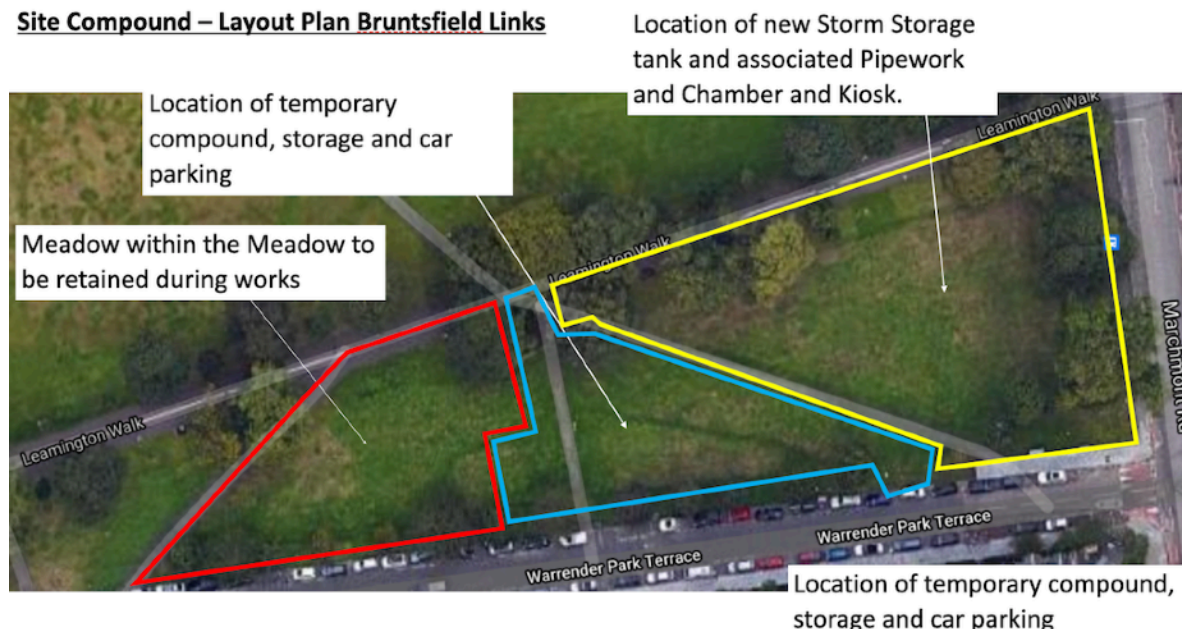
The summer months saw very few planning applications that would affect, or be in the vicinity of, local biodiversity sites. Most were in urbanised areas and were characterised by preparations for the coming winter, such as the felling of overgrown trees, changing of windows and the fixing of roofs. There were a number of applications for lighting permits for store fronts or entrances. Despite the locations being in well-established communities, and not in the vicinity of local biodiversity sites, light pollution is something that we are monitoring closely for the protection of nocturnal wildlife.

City of Edinburgh

A rare planning application (21/04543/FUL) direct clash with a Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) project almost occurred this month. The SWT Lothians Urban Pollinator wildflower meadow project was started six years ago beside The Meadows, Bruntsfield, as our initial local contribution to the Edinburgh Living Landscape. It was in danger of being wiped out by temporary (1-year +) storage area for some sewage works needing to be done beneath an adjacent Council-

owned grass area. A hastily arranged site visit with the public relations and technical staff of this Scottish Water/Caledonian Water (as project implementors) project led to a complete change to their access and storage plan in the area – with the result that 99% of the meadow should be saved. This was a very satisfactory outcome. An oddity of this is that the council have still not (yet) published the new map of the area saving the meadow, so that other objectors had no idea that the plan had changed. So, to add a little colour to this edition of Planning Matters, here it is!

Site Compound – Layout Plan Bruntsfield Links



The new Edinburgh city-wide Local Development Plan 2030 has recently been approved and will go to public consultation in early November 2021 for six weeks. From the relevant consultation web page at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cityplan2030:

“A proposed version of City Plan 2030 was presented to the Council’s Planning Committee on 29 September 2021. The committee approved the proposed City Plan and associated technical and supporting information for a period of representation.

The proposed City Plan 2030, associated background documents and committee report can be found below:

- [View the committee papers](#)
- [Download the City Plan 2030 and background documents](#)

The period for representations will run for 6 weeks, commencing 7 November 2021. Further details on this period of representation, including how to comment on the plan, will be provided shortly.

Prior to preparing the Proposed City Plan 2030, a Main Issues Report (called ‘Choices for City Plan’) was published for consultation in January 2020. This invited comments from stakeholders such as members of the public, community groups and organisations.”

You may see that we were consulted at this Main Issues stage and were pleased with the overall environmental planning policies of this proposed plan. However, now is the time to encourage any local and detailed views of our Edinburgh members affected by the plan. Please could any Edinburgh members affected by the plan contact Carmina (details below) with any such views by the end of November, and/or submit your views to the public consultation website.

Contacts For Planning Matters Affecting Wildlife Sites

You are encouraged to contact your local planning representatives if you think there is a planning issue affecting wildlife.

Midlothian: Susan Manson - mansons@castlesteads.net

East Lothian: Ian Whittaker - ianw0@yahoo.co.uk

West Lothian & City of Edinburgh Council: Carmina Cazan - carminacazan@yahoo.com

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