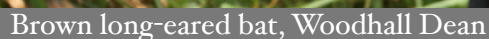




Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust: Lothians Group Newsletter

Full details of all events can be found online at swtlothians.org.uk/events or in the SWT events booklet



Linn Dean, which is generally our best reserve for butterflies, was visited by the One Show in order to obtain footage of Northern Brown Argus for a programme, we believe successfully.

Woodhall Dean Reserve

Apart from the usual records of Great and Blue tits, checks on the bird boxes showed evidence of nuthatches having again used a bird box, as there was bark as nesting material and mud round the lid. Redstarts were seen and heard in the woodland but no adders were observed either near the path or in the outer reaches of the reserve. In July, a pair of Banded Demoiselles, uncommon in these parts, was observed at a large pond adjacent to Woodhall Dean. The male is easily identified from the other blue damselflies as it has a band of pigment across its wings. Speckled Wood butterflies were sighted on the reserve and, in October, a check on the bat boxes found roosting bats which included Pipistrelles, Myotis species and a Brown Long-eared bat. Although its known range includes the Lothians, it is nice to have a record of Brown Long-eared bat on one of our own reserves.

Brock Wood Reserve

Significant work was carried out on some of the reserves during the year. Lothian Group contributed £1000 toward work to replace old boundary fences at Brock Wood in East Lothian, and late in the year felling of one and a half hectares of planted conifers was undertaken by contractors. A few sycamore were removed at the same time but the few native broadleaf trees which had survived were left. The new open areas will now be replanted with native broadleaf trees.

Peterhill Reserve

At Petershill reserve on the edge of Bathgate, we completed the stock fencing and recruited local volunteers to carry out daily checks of our own cattle, which are now set to graze the reserve with the long-term objective of creating flower rich grassland. Unfortunately, the start of grazing had

to be delayed due to the stock being needed elsewhere and will now start in early 2019. Managing our own 'Flying Flock' (the name given to flocks of grazing animals that are

moved around to suit the requirements of numerous different reserves) is a complicated business. Murder Acre at Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch reserve was grazed this summer with twenty three sheep (amazingly difficult to count when checking – there is always one which hides somewhere) with sheep and cattle (two bulls in fact). It is having an impact on the plants growing there as the Bramble has now largely succumbed to the grazing, but Thistles are still common as is Ragwort. The sheep in particular are needed to graze the Ragwort, and we have decided to continue to graze over this summer in the hope of further suppressing these species, before we cease grazing in the following spring and early summer to allow plants to flower.

Johnson Terrace & Red Moss Reserves

Two other reserves had more unusual activity during the year. The "Palm House" in Johnston Terrace Wildlife Garden proved popular again with visitors during the Edinburgh Arts Festival with around 10,000 visitors and is likely to form part of the festival again in 2019.

At Red Moss peat core samples have been taken as part of a complex research project undertaken by various universities including Edinburgh looking at the chemistry of pristine bogs and the effectiveness of restoration of damaged sites. The results should be interesting but will not be published for some time.



Removal of conifer plantation, Brock Wood

Wildlife Watch

...at Bawsinch
Nature Reserve,
November 2018

It was an unpromising, grey, drizzly Sunday. Not promising for lots of smiles from our group, nor were we expecting a grand turnout. But thankfully, four keen and excited children braved a chilly morning at Bawsinch Nature Reserve for Wildlife Watch.

It is a fantastic area for our group and, as it's usually quiet, it means we can explore without disturbing others or being disturbed ourselves. It is also a fenced in reserve, which is a bonus for the health and safety assessment!

November's session was focusing on migration and hibernation and we planned a few different activities in our 2-hour session to bring the subject to life. We explored an area behind the main bird hide to find signs of hibernating solitary bees; we then went to the woods to learn about how animals who neither hibernate or migrate might survive the winter, and bring in how they play an important part in the eco-system. We built dens to help us through the Winter, and even had a bug hunt! We where we were certainly surprised at how much life we managed to find under some slimy logs. And we were all impressed at the level of knowledge that the children have! With the chill setting in, we played a migration-themed game of 'tag' to get some feeling back into our toes.

To round off the day we had a quick gander in the bird hide before heading back to the entrance gate for pick up. The kids thoroughly enjoyed the day, as did the leaders! We love seeing the kids enjoy themselves, but also seeing them immersing themselves in nature and learning is hugely rewarding.

Jonathan Kemsley, The Phoenix Group

Edinburgh Wildlife Watch group (for age 5 - 10 year olds)
meets on the last Sunday of every month from
10am-12pm. Cost usually £2.

Visit scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/watch-group/edinburgh/ for
more information about how to join!

Edinburgh Swift Project

The RSPB Giving Nature a Home team has been delivering the swift project in Edinburgh for three years. They have been working with schools to create ambassadors for the swift and recruiting volunteers city wide to record swift sightings.

Each May, we hold a training event to recruit volunteers to become citizen scientists and record the swifts throughout the summer. We have around 50 volunteers across the city going out twice a year to survey swifts in their local area. We are only in the third year of data collection but we have been able to build a base line survey made up of the nest sites and 'screaming party' records. This vital information helps us to recognise important areas for swift populations, and to be able to promote these to the public and the council.

The ambassador schools have been creating meadows and putting up swift boxes up in their local areas, as well as promoting Swift Bricks to developers. We want any new developments to have Swift Bricks to increase the number of new nesting sites in the city.

To take part in 2019's survey please contact:
fiona.weir@rspb.org.uk



Ben Andrew RSPB images

New Lothian Talk Editor

Declan Duffy, who has been the dedicated editor of these Lothian Talk newsletters for the past four years, has recently stepped down from the role due to increasing work and life commitments. We would like to thank him for all his marvellous work over the years and wish him well in all his future endeavours.

As the new editor, I look forward to continuing in Declan's footsteps by sharing the SWT Lothian's news, both here and in the online edition. If you have anything you would like to contribute to either edition, please contact me on editor@swtlothians.org.uk

Kate Walters, Lothian Talk editor

Planning Matters, January 2019

City of Edinburgh

- A new 3-year Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Edinburgh is near completion, with publication expected early in 2019.
- There is an application at Craigpark Quarry, Ratho. A water park is to be built here, close to but not on, a Local Biodiversity Site. This has now been approved, locals are in favour.
- Work continues to follow developments at the Astley Ainslie hospital greenspaces site.

Midlothian

The review of the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Plan has continued. We are fortunate to have two committed individuals within Midlothian planning team driving this forward. The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC: www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk) is also heavily involved identifying key species and habitats. At a meeting in October, we discussed the draft version and identified themes, actions and potential projects. In particular SWT was able to suggest incorporating some existing projects on SWT sites in Midlothian within the plan. These will be developed as the draft plan is finalised.

The final draft of Midlothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) arrived in January 2019, after a meeting to the partnership in December to discuss the draft plan and actions. This plan has got to hold the record for the fastest from initial discussion to final draft of any plan in Scotland. Around 9 months by our reckoning!

Midlothian Council has also published a new strategy on its commitment to greening Midlothian. Entitled, 'Supplementary Guidance on Midlothian Green Network', it outlines how it will create and enhance the green network in six key areas, largely in north Midlothian, which are subject to development. The Guidance refers to the BAP and links between the two plans. These provide a good foundation for Midlothian to build on its Biodiversity credentials.

East Lothian

After a long and involved process the new East Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP) has finally been adopted by the council. Scottish Ministers notified the Council that the plan can be adopted as of October. This new plan replaces the LDP for 2008. Of particular interest to the SWT are the proposals for management of the Levenhall Links. This is the area of reclaimed land commonly known as the Lagoons which has been developed in a wildlife habitat and well used walking area. The land previously belonged to Scottish Power but over the last few years some of the restored land has been transferred to the Council. The last two lagoons are due for restoration and will be transferred to the Council once the restoration is complete. In the plan, the area is classified as an Area for Habitat Improvement. The SWT pressed for this to be a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in the plan but without success. However there is still some local support for this designation.

East Lothian Council has also produced a draft Green Network Strategy with a final version expected later this year. There is a lot of good information on existing wildlife and conservation sites in East Lothian. The strategy commits to protecting and replacing woodland, creating new sites for wildlife and improving connectivity of habitats. It also includes a number of very useful maps showing the location of nature conservation and biodiversity sites, ancient woodland, ponds and other features demonstrating the diversity and overall value of green networks in the landscape of East Lothian.

As always the implementation of such a strategy is the key factor and East Lothian propose to set up a Green Network Working Group with key stakeholders. The strategy also mention plans to advance a new Biodiversity Action Plan working with partners such as us and we were concerned that when the current council Biodiversity office, Stuart Macpherson, moved recently to a new job in the borders with SNH he might not be replaced. However council officials have moved very effectively to make the case to replace his post in this time of great Local Authority austerity and they succeeded with the post likely to have been filled by the time you read this. We look forward to working with the new Biodiversity officer as closely as we did with Stuart and congratulate East Lothian for recognising the vital work that such a post does for East Lothian Biodiversity and the Biodiversity duty that public authorities have to fulfill under current legislation.

Planning Matters, January 2019 (continued)**West Lothian**

In autumn 2018, nine planning applications were either close or adjacent to Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) / pLBS (sites assessed, or to be re-surveyed and assessed as LBS) – Faucheldean Bing, Canal Wood, Barbauchlaw Burn, Murieston Water, Longridge Moss, Almondell Country Park. In addition, a proposed fish pass, to improve access for migratory fish, lies within Limefield Glen and Harwood Water pLBS. The nearby presence of local nature conservation sites has not been mentioned in any of these cases. Individually, these proposed developments seem unlikely to damage the sites directly, and the Limefield Glen fish pass will improve the river as a habitat for migratory fish. However, taken together, they suggest that the LBS notification system in West Lothian Council may not be working as effectively as it could be. This has been raised with the Council.

A housing development next to Little Boghead LBS attracted 58 objections, including one from the Friends of Little Boghead Nature Reserve (co-ordinated by Jim Easton, our local reserve convener for Tailend Moss and the former Bogburn Flood Lagoons reserve). A decision has not yet been made on the proposed development. Even if the development is approved it may be possible to ask for conditions that maintain and enhance the habitat connectivity of Little Boghead.

Although Bogburn Flood Lagoons has now been de-notified as an SWT reserve, it remains an LBS. As the site is owned by West Lothian Council it seems sensible that we try to ensure that a favourable management regime for the site is maintained. West Lothian Council also owns the nearby Little Boghead Nature Reserve.

Meanwhile, the Forth Rivers Trust is carrying out a major rehabilitation of part the Bog Burn adjacent to the Flood Lagoons. Ideally, we would like to work in partnership with the Fisheries Trust and West Lothian Council to develop an integrated management programme for these three sites – Bogburn Flood Lagoons, the Fisheries Trust rehabilitation site and Little Boghead Nature Reserve. This would provide an excellent “blue corridor” for wildlife in this part of West Lothian. Contact has been made with West Lothian Council to try to initiate these discussions.

For planning matters affecting wildlife sites please write to:**City of Edinburgh Planning Representative**

Alan Templeton - alan.templeton@hotmail.co.uk

Midlothian / East Lothian

Susan Manson - mansons@castlesteads.net or Castlesteads, Dalkeith, EH22 2NJ

A new volunteer, Ian Whittaker, is also helping Susan here.

West Lothian

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

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