



**Scottish  
Wildlife  
Trust**

# Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust: Lothians Group Newsletter

## Dates for your Diary Autumn 2019

### Guided Walk: **Bawsinch NR**

- Sun 13th Oct; 2pm-4pm
- Meet at Bawsinch hide

### Talk: **Dragonflies of Scotland**

- Thurs 17th Oct; 7.30-9pm
- Andrea Hudspeth, British Dragonfly Society

### Guided Walk: **Winter Bird ID**

- Sat 9th Nov; 12-3pm
- Meet at Balcarres Road, near Goose Green, Musselburgh

### Talk: **Carrifran Project: Southern Upland Rewilding**

- Thurs 14th Nov; 7.30-9pm
- Philip Ashmole

### Talk: **Hills Need Friends**

- Thurs 19th Dec; 7.30-9pm
- Friends of the Pentland Hills

### Talk: **The Effects of Climate Change of Wildlife**

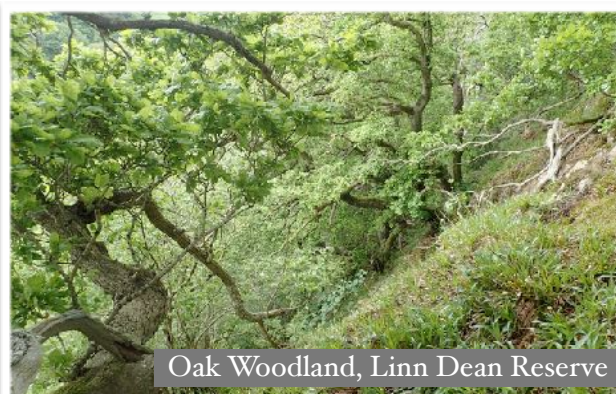
- Thurs 13th Feb; 7.30-9pm
- Roy Thomson, Professor Emeritus at the University of Edinburgh, Geosciences

## Talk Locations

Unless stated otherwise, all talks are free of charge and take place at:

Guide Headquarters  
33 Melville Street  
Edinburgh, EH3 7JF

Full details of all events can be found online at [swtlothians.org.uk/events](http://swtlothians.org.uk/events) or in the SWT events booklet



*Photos courtesy of Ben Averis*

## Extension to Linn Dean Reserve

*by Ken Knowles*

After a complicated set of negotiations linked to an adjacent wind farm development, the Trust has now acquired an extension to our Linn Dean reserve. The existing Linn Dean Reserve is located along Linn Dean Water, just off the A68 at Soutra, and the 10 hectare extension is to the north on the steep slopes of the Linn Dean.

The Trust commissioned a botanical survey, which was carried out in June by Ben Averis. The botanical survey showed that the extension has good examples of native woodland, grassland and bracken-dominated vegetation. They are composed almost entirely of native plant species, and in some areas are species-rich and include species that are uncommon in this part of Scotland. However, significant parts of the new extension have been planted with non-native conifers, some of which will be very difficult to harvest on these steep slopes.

In July the Reserve Management Group visited the site and was shown round by Julian Warman, the Lothian and Borders Reserve Manager. At least, we were shown areas which it was reasonably sensible and safe to reach, given that significant parts of the extension are either extremely steep or precipitous! The reserve extension does not lend itself to visiting; there are animal trails in places working their way up the slopes, but clearly being four-legged is a great help. However, the existing Linn Dean Reserve is wonderful botanically, an excellent place for butterflies and other insects, and is well worth visiting.



## Planning Matters, Sept 19

**East Lothian:** We are again receiving a Council list of planning applications in proximity to designated wildlife sites including Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS), which were given prominence by the council adopting its new Green Network Strategy in February 2019. The strategy lists details of the LBSs and their importance as the core of the high-quality green network, including an intention to update the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). One site from these lists - Skateraw Quarry near Dunbar - was filled in 18 years ago with Pulverised Fly Ash (PFA) from Cockenzie power station. Now there is a demand for PFA, the quarry is to be excavated then restored again. This site is near Dryburn Valley Local Biodiversity Site and the landscape plan identifies biodiversity interest. Catherine Cumming - the new East Lothian Biodiversity officer - hopes to start work on a new Local BAP in 2020, with the help of interested parties.

**Midlothian:** The Midlothian Council Ranger Service's August 'Walking Festival' this year became the 'Outdoor Festival' and was widened out to include wildlife-related events. Next year we plan to incorporate some BAP events into the Festival. A section of disused railway line at Eskbank has been proposed as a potential Local Biodiversity Site (LBS) by local people, but current survey records are inadequate to support a LBS assessment. A recent proposal by Sustrans to place a cycling/walking route along this section has also been withdrawn.

**West Lothian:** In past years, the Lothian councils have restricted mowing on Scottish Wildlife Trust identified roadside verges, to ensure these natural wildflower areas could thrive and be enjoyed by road users. West Lothian council have continued uninterrupted with this regime, to their immense credit. With council mowing time being reduced, we were asked to review the existing sites and make recommendations. With the aid of BSBI botanist, Jacqui Muscott, we achieved that this summer. The council is now working out what they can do, including possibly purchasing a tool to taking the mowings off their managed wildflower meadows. They would be the first council in the Lothians with such an important tool for wildflowers.

**Edinburgh:** Our current planning representative, Alan Templeton, is moving on and we thank him for his excellent work over the years. For a short period, please contact Tim Duffy for Edinburgh-based issues.

*Dr Tim Duffy, SWT Lothians Planning Secretary*

### For planning matters affecting wildlife sites in:

#### Midlothian / East Lothian

Susan Manson - [mansons@castlesteads.net](mailto:mansons@castlesteads.net) or Castlesteads, Dalkeith, EH22 2NJ

#### West Lothian

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

#### City of Edinburgh Planning Representative

Dr Tim Duffy - [timrduffy1@gmail.com](mailto:timrduffy1@gmail.com) (temporarily)

## Blackford Bat Walk

On a cool September evening another bat watch night was expertly guided at Blackford Pond, by Natalie Todman. With the help of bat detectors we identified two kinds of pipistrelles (soprano and banded) flitting amongst the trees. Flying above the pond were Daubenton bats, which are slightly bigger and have a different echo location sound. Natalie also had a clever phone gadget that could identify all the bats in an area at once! The number of bats was considerably better than last year and, thanks to social media, almost 50 people turned up, including several children. We raised £80 for bat & other wildlife conservation and would like to thank everyone who came to support us.

*Jo Doake*

## Summer Badger Watch

Tricia Alderson of the Edinburgh and Lothian Badger Group lead four very successful badger watches in July. These were very well attended and the feedback from attendees was excellent with many badgers sighted over the course of the evenings. The sites, which were kept confidential prior to the meets, were located in the areas west of Edinburgh. All participants were requested to keep the sites confidential and not to revisit them, so as not to stress the badgers and cause them to move location.



The evening started around 8.30pm and involved a short, but very quiet, walk to the sett while keeping downwind, because according to Tricia they are easily disturbed by human scent and sounds near the sett. Tricia issued some excellent badger watching advice which involved taking warm clothing, insect repellent, binoculars, something waterproof to sit on, and no rusty waterproofs.

Most evenings involved sitting very still and quietly until the badgers appeared normally around 9.30pm. However, once they came out, they were very active and playful, especially the youngsters.



Sun-soaked badger

All in all, four very successful and interesting evenings which we hope to repeat next year.

*Words by Allan Mathieson, photographs by Richard Doake*