

# Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians Group Newsletter

<http://swtlothians.org.uk>

## Chairman's notes

At our recent AGM we were happy to report another successful year of fundraising. In the last year we raised £4,475 by can collections - which is very close to previous years. We have also increased other donations to nearly £250, part of which has come from Bawsinch where the donations received following guided walks has significantly increased, not least from two recent visits of groups of American students from colleges in Texas and Pennsylvania.

While we now have a healthy balance of unallocated general funds, even after allowing for our regular expenditure, we do anticipate the need for significant funding for reserve management work this year. Tree felling at our Brock Wood reserve and possibly fence repairs at Bawsinch are expensive items. Fund raising will therefore continue to be a priority.

A volunteer's weekend was run by HQ over the weekend of 29/30 April. It was held at Duddingston in the Church Hall and in our Bawsinch reserve. My contribution was showing off Bawsinch and trialling a "comprehensive" tour of the reserve including Murder

Acre but we will need to greatly improve the route along the south side of the loch before this can become a regular event.

The Lothian Group has contributed to the Edinburgh Living Landscape scheme this year by organising (in conjunction with the Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links) the tripling in size of the Urban Pollination Meadow in the Meadows. We are also involved in the SWT Edinburgh Foreshore initiative and are developing schemes for interpretation of the geological features and marine life along the Granton/Wardie shore of the Forth.

I reported on our reserves in the News from Lothian Reserves in the last Lothian Talk. One update for those of you who pass by Duddingston and have seen the cattle grazing in Murder Acre over the winter is that we have decided this year to put back stock over the summer to try to reduce the fertility and suppress the coarse grasses and tall herbs and particularly bramble which still dominate the area.

Ken Knowles

## Talks for your diary

**Scottish Beavers - reinforcing the Knapdale population**

**Thursday 19th October. 7:30 - 9:30pm**

Following the minister's announcement to formally recognise beavers as a native species, Ben Harrower of Scottish Beavers will give an insight into the work being done to reinforce the wild beaver population in the Knapdale Forest.

Contact: Declan Duffy 0793 101 5891

These talks will take place at 33 Melville Street, EH3 7JF.

Talks are free but donations are greatly appreciated

Disabled access available by prior arrangement, please contact Peter Bain - 0131 447 8937

**Bird ringing - from Scotland to Cyprus  
Thursday 9th November. 7:30- 9:30pm**

Former RSPB Scotland ecologist, Clive Walton, has been a member of the Lothian and Tay Ringing Groups for over 25 years and is licenced by the BTO to train and assess other ringers. He has held Schedule 1 licences for rare and endangered raptors, but his passion is for small brown birds that migrate!

His talk will look into how ringing is undertaken and will exemplify some of the uses of data collected. He will also describe what kind of ringing activities take place locally in the Lothians, and describe his on-going project in Cyprus.

Contact: Colin Shepherd 0131 229 5427

# Planning matters

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## West Lothian

Comments were made on two public consultations from West Lothian Council:

- Guidelines on Residential Housing
- Development of Green Networks

Both were draft Supplementary Guidance documents for the latest Local Development Plan (which is currently with the Scottish Government for approval). The Green Networks document included improved guidance on Local Biodiversity Sites and, a new for West Lothian category of designation – Local Geodiversity Sites.

The Trust was able to support both Supplementary Guidance documents as the proposals would be to the benefit of wildlife in West Lothian. The Trust made a number of suggestions to strengthen the proposals and improve the clarity of the guidance.

A successful meeting of the Local Biodiversity Site Steering Group was held in March, where 6 new sites were accepted. This means that there are now 69 Local Biodiversity Sites designated by West Lothian Council. A further 57 sites are on the list of potential LBS (mostly the previously designated SWT Listed Wildlife Sites). Progress in evaluating these sites has been slow in recent years, because of resource constraints on the surveying/assessment effort. Consideration has to be given as to how we can help West Lothian council find the survey resource to improve their rate of listing LBS as the other councils in the Lothians have effectively finished the current round of re-survey and assessment.

## Edinburgh

A proposed housing development at Craigpark Quarry is near the Union Canal Local Biodiversity Site but currently does not appear to be affecting such sites adversely.

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## Planning Contacts

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

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

Edinburgh: Alan Templeton - [alan.templeton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:alan.templeton@hotmail.co.uk)

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## Midlothian

The Proposed Plan for Midlothian is still with Scottish Ministers having been submitted in autumn 2016. As before, Midlothian is still operating within a plan approved in 2008.

Auchencorth Moss: This peat extraction site near Penicuik was granted planning permission in 1986 and work on the site could technically continue until 2042. The recent application was to review the conditions attached to the original planning consent. The planning authority's hands are tied to an extent by legislation. However the Council did manage to secure the restoration of the site as a raised bog. This will be once peat removal is complete. The Trust formally objected to the application.

## East Lothian

The Trust has been involved in commenting on the new plan for East Lothian. Our last submission was in November 2016. The proposed Plan for East Lothian was submitted to Scottish Ministers on 4th May 2017. The Trust asked for a proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR) to be included for the Levenhall Links area (as well as previously for Mavisbank Estate Local Biodiversity Site). This was included as a possibility in the Main Issues Report some time ago so it is disappointing not to see a commitment to any LNR in this, the possibly final version of the plan. However the plan does include a commitment to managing the land at Levenhall as an Area of Habitat Improvement.

Tim Duffy



# Wildlife Watch round up!

The Edinburgh Wildlife Watch group arranges a variety of fun activities and events for children aged 5 to 10. From nature trails to scavenger hunts, arts and crafts to fungal forays, there are loads of cool ways to get closer to wildlife in your area.

Find out more at: <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/watch-group/edinburgh/>

## January – Winter Wildlife Olympics

In January the Winter Wildlife Olympics came to the Holyrood Ranger Centre! We all joined team G-Tree testing our skills with the challenges of nature, attempting to get a personal best and finding out all about nature's champions! We discovered which creatures would win gold, silver and bronze for their special sporting and athletic abilities. Like the tiger for high jumping, the leatherback turtle for diving and the polar bear for swimming!

We played a memory game collecting plants from around the centre to see if we could be as clever as the bottlenose dolphin and a hearing game to see if we could use our ears as well as the greater wax moth - the creature with the best hearing out of all - 150 times better than ours!

## February – Brilliant Bawsinch – bush craft and den building

In February we held our session at Bawsinch nature reserve next to Duddingston loch. With a few newbies joining us; we made dens in the woods and had a go at lighting a camp fire! Going around all the dens at the end was great and each den had a different purpose – good shelter from weather, a platform on the roof for keeping watch or one with an open back to enjoy the view!

This session was great for getting back to nature as it is completely outside in the reserve, enjoying the woodland and discovering the best ways to survive in the wild! Making s'mores by the campfire is always a treat for everyone too!

## March – Go wild with a ranger!

In March we ran a joint session with Gordon, one of the Holyrood park rangers. The road by Arthurs Seat is closed during this time of year as a lot of toads are crossing the road to go and breed. In the morning before the session, the rangers did their usual road check and picked up some toads for us to look at a bit closer! The children loved getting to see the toads and learning more about them.

After a running game showing the swallow migration from Edinburgh to Africa, we ventured into the park to see what we could find. Arriving at Hunters Bog we had a look and found lots of toad spawn which is found laid in long lines compared to frog spawn which are laid in large clumps.



## April – Cottage capers at the Botanic Cottage

This session was slightly different as we were based at the Edinburgh Botanical Gardens. We were helping out at the Edible Garden Festival at the Botanic Cottage where there were several activities going on from making pesto, planting some peas or doing a nature trail.

The activities we ran included making bird feeders and pond dipping. For the bird feeders we were based inside the recently renovated Botanic Cottage, making feeders by sticking sunflower seeds into apples in fun designs and attaching them to a stick with string so they could be hung onto a tree for the birds to enjoy. This was a busy session and we used all of our apples - lot of treats for the garden birds!

This was a really good day to meet new people and introduce them to our Wildlife Watch group. It was great to see the children inspired by nature and learn all about gardening in an environmentally friendly way.





# Events for your diary

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## Badger watching

Wednesday 19th July.

Enjoy a chance to spot one of the UK's most elusive mammals at our summer badger watches.

As the organisers do not want to publicise the exact location of this event details will be given only to those who attend. Suggested donation £5 per person.

Numbers are very limited so booking is essential.

Contact Peter Bain - 0131 447 8937

## Summer flora and moths at Aberlady

Saturday 15th July. 10am - 1pm

Guided walk at Aberlady Bay where Reserve Warden John Harrison will have set up moth traps the previous evening and will open these up when we are there. We will also look at the diverse summer flora and birdlife.

Free. Booking not required.

Contact: Colin Shepherd - 0131 229 5427

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## Red Moss of Balerno, Open Day

Sunday 23rd July. 12 - 5pm

This year's Open Day at the SWT Red Moss reserve will take place on International Bog Day and feature a variety of exciting events for the whole family.

Red Moss of Balerno: EH14 7JT

Free. Booking not required.

Contact: Tim Duffy 0796 853 0678

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## Bat walk at Blackford Pond

Saturday 12th August. 8:45 - 10pm

An evening stroll round Blackford Pond with John Leach who will bring bat detectors which will enable us to identify bats such as Pipistrelles and Daubenton's.

Meet at the main gate to Blackford Pond on Cluny Gardens at the junction with Oswald Road.

Suggested donation of £3 per person.

Numbers are limited so booking is required.

Contact Peter Bain: 0131 447 8937

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## Birdwatching at Musselburgh Lagoons

Saturday 19th August. 12 - 2pm

Ranger led walk at Musselburgh, primarily to see birdlife, particularly early migrants, where August is often a good time to see ruff. Level tracks and paths throughout.

Meet at end of Balcarres Road, next to Goose Green (NT347735)

Free. Booking not required.

Contact: Colin Shepherd 0131 229 5427

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## Goosewalk at Aberlady

Saturday 14th October. 3:30- 6:30pm

Guided walk at Aberlady Bay where Warden John Harrison will lead us on walk through the reserve, the return leg of which should coincide with the geese flying in to their overnight roost there.

Meet at reserve car park (NT472804)

Free. Booking not required.

Contact: Colin Shepherd 0131 229 5427

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## Guided walks at Bawsinch - Sundays

23rd Jul/13th Aug/10th Sep/8th Oct. 2 - 4pm

Come along to our guided walks at Bawsinch. Take a guided walk in Bawsinch nature reserve or simply enjoy a walk around part of the normally closed reserve and take in some bird watching from the hide.

Meet at Bawsinch hide at 2pm. Bring suitable footwear, clothing and binoculars.

Accessible by public transport. No need to pre-book.

Free but donations are much appreciated.

