

# Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians Group Newsletter

<http://swtlothians.org.uk>

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## Chairman's Notes

SWT Lothians Group had an excellent well attended AGM on 23rd April, the due diligence and appointment of keen (and getting younger!) volunteer committees at which was followed swiftly by an excellent talk by Helen Brown of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust. Helen was delighted at the thought of one day there being breeding European Beavers on the Leith (as they are currently in the urban conurbation rivers of Munich and Orleans for example) dependent of course on the Scottish Government making a positive decision to approve the formal re-introductions of Beavers, a decision which they are due to make this year.

In 'National Biodiversity week' at the end of May we held our annual Red Moss of Balerno Open day and a healthy 57 people attended. The pond dipping with the kids went so well that one actually had to be pulled out having gotten too close to the Palmate newts and the large diving beetles!

Finally I want to thank many of you for sponsoring us (for the SWT 50th anniversary appeal) on my tour of the 120 reserves of the SWT which enters its last three legs this summer. In June Paul Ritchie

(former finance director of the SWT) and I are cycling round the Orkney reserves and down the east coast to Stirling. In July we do the Borders reserves and then finally in September we do a big 'circle' of reserves south of Glasgow with the final day (of the approx. 2000 mile total route) on Bank holiday Monday 21 September.

Now many of you met us when we went around the 20 Lothian reserves last summer, and some of you said 'we will join you cycling on the last day if it is less than the average 65 miles a day!' and so we have planned that the last day shall be a pretty flat (mostly along the union canal) 33 miles from the Jupiter reserve, Grangemouth back to where it all started last year at the Bawsinch reserve, Duddingston. If you can get you and your bike to Jupiter reserve by 10am on Monday 21 September and want to join us (refreshments will be provided at the end!) please email Nick Wright ([nwright@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:nwright@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk)), remembering of course to get friends (and/or businesses with 'spare shares') to sponsor you/us by going to our justgiving page at <http://bit.ly/SWT50th>!

Tim Duffy

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## Lothians group email list

We recently started occasionally emailing the 2700+ of you (i.e. about half the 5500+ membership in the Lothians Group area) who have given permission for your registered email address to be used for SWT business and we recently offered places on our organised badgers watch events in Edinburgh in the summer by email as we had no other route to contact you in time. All those places were snapped up very quickly by those lucky enough to get the email.

If you have not registered your up to date email

address with us or SWT HQ and so did not get that email from swtlothians on April 18, would you consider emailing [swtlothians@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:swtlothians@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk) to register your email with us for SWT use (we shall pass it onto SWT HQ also, as they are the legal implementers of the Data Protection Act for this charity – they are very efficient at preventing misuse of such emails and remove you from all such lists as soon as you request it) so that in future we can more efficiently communicate with you?

# Planning Matters. Summer 2015

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## Focus on Midlothian

It all seems to be happening in the last quarter in Midlothian so we focus this report on it in this issue. In June the final version of the new Midlothian Local Plan is out to consultation and we will respond. The key items concerning the planning policy protection of the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) are good enough and not controversial at this stage. This spring our involvement with the council's Local Biodiversity Site assessment committee has led to our sponsorship of the formal full Botanical survey of the final five sites in Midlothian that need full survey to allow them to be

assessed and if passing the criteria, protected by these local plan policies. The council cannot afford these surveys with their financial constraints to finally finish these local plan policy sites but thanks to the public's generosity and our team of dedicated can donation collectors (we are not allowed to call them can 'shakers' under charity collection rules!) we can afford to get Midlothian finally finished with survey in time for this final local plan publication.

There is a planning application near Camp Wood LBS (near the old Blinkbonny opencast mine) but we believe there is an agricultural grazing area buffer between the LBS and

the application effects.

There is an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) scoping study request for comment for an application to partially infill part of Middleton lime quarries. We shall point out to the council that this site is already protected by two LBS designations of theirs – Middleton lime quarries East and West – and those sites and for example their local bat populations must not be affected by this proposal.

Finally there are formal proposals to extend the Pentland Regional Park southwards– this will involve legislation to actually happen.

Tim Duffy

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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.

Lothians Group Planning Secretary: Tim Duffy - Flat 4F2, 34 Warrender Park Terrace, Edinburgh, EH9 1ED, Tel/Ans 0131 2288785.



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## Walk at John Muir Country Park, Dunbar - Saturday 8 August. 1pm

This is a new venue for us but it promises to be an interesting one, incorporating a range of habitats including salt marsh, dunes, beach, and woodland. The walk will be led by Countryside Ranger Tara Sykes and is anticipated to last around 2 hours. Tara will tell us about each of the different habitats and explain the history of the site and its management. At this time of the year we should see much in the way of flora, including Grass of Parnassus, Vipers Bugloss and Strawberry Clover. We may be lucky enough to spot some Cinnabar Moths or at least their caterpillars. There will also be some birdlife, so remember your binoculars!

We will meet up with Tara in the main car park for the Country Park at Linkfield (GR NT652787) at

1pm. For those travelling by public transport from Edinburgh or Haddington there is regular Firstbus service (X5) and there is a bus stop on the main road into Dunbar just before West Barns, which is at the top of the road leading to the car park. From Edinburgh, the bus journey takes approximately 1 hour 10 minutes, but you should check the latest information with Firstbus before travelling.

Please be prepared for changeable weather, as this is an exposed site and in particular you should wear sturdy footwear such as hiking boots as the ground will be uneven and the salt marsh may be soggy! You may also like to take something to drink and a snack.

For more info contact Colin Shepherd on 0131 229 5427

## Events for your diary

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### Bat walk at Blackford Pond - Thursday 13 August. 8:45pm

An event with volunteers from Lothian bat group who will bring bat detectors to enable us to hear the bats' ultrasonic echo-location calls. On previous walks we have seen pipistrelles and Daubenton's bats. Bring insect repellent!

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

For more info contact Karen Pearson on 0131 667 3855

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### Reviving nature's arteries - Tuesday 29 September. 7.30pm

Talk by Alison Baker of the River Forth Fisheries Trust and Harry Millar of the River Avon Federation in Linlithgow Burgh Halls, The Cross EH49 7AH

The River Forth Fisheries Trust was established to advance the environmental protection and improvement of all rivers which enter the Firth of Forth, by conserving, maintaining and restoring freshwater habitats and their native species of freshwater fish. This illustrated talk will encompass a range of programmes, including that for Invasive Non-Native Species, and the recently awarded HLF and SEPA Water Environment Fund support for an exciting project on the Almond and Avon rivers.

The best local example is shown in the River Avon which has undergone a dramatic change in the past twenty-five years. The river was blighted by the various effluents from past industrialisation, to the extent it had been so heavily polluted that it was completely de-oxygenated, resulting in no invertebrates nor fish, and the usual river based bird life was non-existent. However the dedication of members of the River Avon Federation shows how concerted efforts can revive and rejuvenate a truly wild corridor for the benefit of wildlife, anglers and the wider community alike.

For more info contact Averil Stewart on 01506 842676

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### Scotlands deep sea habitats - Thursday 8 October. 7:30pm

Public lecture by professor J Murray Roberts of Heriot Watt University entitled 'Scotlands deepsea ecosystems and their future in a changing ocean.' The lecture includes new video footage of deep sea habitats and a demo of ocean acidification in action.

The talk will be held at 33 Melville Street Edinburgh.

Disabled access available by prior arrangement, please contact Karen Pearson 0131 667 3855.

### Guided walk at Bawsinch - Sunday 18 October. 2pm

There will be a guided walk in Bawsinch starting at 2pm on Sunday 18th October. Meet at the hide via the wicket gate at the corner of Duddingston Road West on the south side of Duddingston Loch. Visitors who have already been on a guided walk will also be welcome to spend time walking round part of the reserve or bird watching from the hide. The reserve will close at 4pm.

For more info contact Ken Knowles on 0131 539 6643

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All listed events are free but  
donations are greatly  
appreciated.

Non members welcome

Lothian Talk is edited by Declan  
Duffy.  
Suggestions and photos welcome.  
Please send to  
declan.duffy.92@gmail.com

For more info about upcoming  
events go to  
[www.swtlothians.org.uk](http://www.swtlothians.org.uk)



# Our Living Landscape

SWT volunteer Eleanor Harris gives an insight into an exciting new urban initiative

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About ten years ago, on holiday in Kent, I picked up a Wildlife Trust magazine and read about 'Living Landscapes: the future of nature conservation'. Whereas the "nature reserve" perpetuates the myth that we are outside nature, the Living Landscape recognises that wildlife can and must flourish alongside humans, along our roads, on our roof tops, in our farmland and gardens, where our children play and in the midst of our businesses. I found the concept addictively appealing, so when I heard that Scottish Wildlife Trust were to launch a Living Landscape in Edinburgh, it was a personal wish come true.

Edinburgh Living Landscape is a partnership between Scottish Wildlife Trust, Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, the Botanic Gardens, and GREENSURGE. SWT is managing the project. The Council is involved in public engagement and public spaces. The Greenspace Trust's exciting project Tree Time Edinburgh is getting businesses valuing and planting trees. The Botanic Gardens are facilitating the installation of green walls and roofs. Finally, GREENSURGE links us to an international network of green city projects. This is not a comprehensive list of the partners' activities, but they're the main ones just now.

You may have seen some things happening already. I noticed "no mow" areas on the Meadows, and a wildflower patch in Figgate Park, before Edinburgh Living Landscape was officially launched. Interpretation signs are now appearing. Facebook and Twitter feeds @edinlandscape are online, and are the best way to follow the many local ongoing projects. A special Edinburgh wildflower seed mixture is being produced, and hopefully by the time you read this, will be available for your gardens.

However, the Edinburgh Living Landscape Program Plan, (which can be found online at [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks\\_and\\_green\\_spaces/1160/edinburgh\\_living\\_landscape](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks_and_green_spaces/1160/edinburgh_living_landscape)) has far more ambitious objectives. These include increasing the proportion of journeys made on foot or by bicycle, signing up 10,000 Edinburgh residents to a wildlife gardening pledge, and increasing the area of "de-paved" soil. This last challenge involves reversing a trend. In my own street alone three households have paved their front gardens in the last couple of years while another replaced a beautiful flowering hedge with a stone wall, banishing its sparrows.

There are several thousand Scottish Wildlife Trust members in Edinburgh, so we have the power to make a huge contribution. Eliminating pesticides, allowing part of your lawn to become a meadow area, planting for pollinators, putting up bird or bug houses, growing your own organic food, creating brush-piles or hedgehog holes in fences, making a pond, putting sedum on your shed roof or replacing a flagstone with a shrub, every act of this sort makes you a hero for nature. When the bees, birds, frogs and hedgehogs move in (which they will), you'll know nature is grateful. Your friends and neighbours will be jealous, and follow your example. Even in my city-centre flatshare, a couple of windowboxes yield fresh salad and herbs all summer, and buzz with insects on what was previously a barren stone ledge.

So next time you walk through Edinburgh, notice and imagine how it's becoming a Living Landscape: a web of trees, flowers, insects, birds, animals, lichen, spiders – and you.

Eleanor Harris

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