

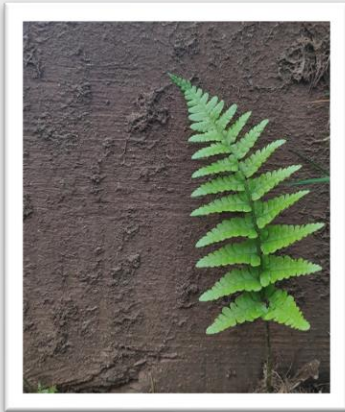


Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust: Lothians Group Newsletter

Catch-up online

Watch recordings of any talks that you missed - scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/things-to-do/watch-wildlife-online/online-talks



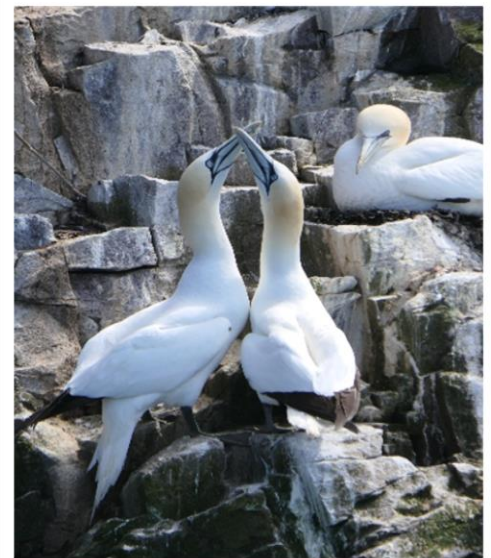
Volunteer

Get in touch if you'd like to help with practical conservation work, can collecting, organising our walks and talks or parts of our media etc.

We certainly look forward to welcoming you.
volunteer@swtlothians.org.uk

Enjoy Nature this Spring!

The Lothians and surroundings are blessed with great nature. In this newsletter we would like to encourage you to go out there and enjoy it.



Many of the SWT Lothians reserves are very accessible to visit and to roam around, and Spring is one of the best times to get out and go see what your membership supports.

We hope that the gannets on Bass Rock and other seabirds affected by the Avian flu outbreak start recovering this breeding season.

When you visit, please do respect each reserve for what it is - a wildlife haven. Thank you and enjoy.

Around our reserves - by Pete Sykes

As I'm writing this in January, the city is thawing out following the recent cold snap and out on the SWT reserves, things are a little slow; winter migrants are here but trees are bare, birds are quiet and plants are waiting. However, you are probably now reading this in March and life on the reserves is changing rapidly. Birds will be nesting, spring flowers will be out and there will be a lot more activity to see. Now wildlife reserves have two purposes; the main one is obviously to preserve a rich habitat for wildlife and to

SWT Lothians help LCV buy a new minibus – by Trevor Patterson

SWT Lothians Group has had a close relationship with Lothians Conservation Volunteers (LCV) for over 50 years, so we were happy to help them with a £1000 donation last year when they needed to replace their old minibus.



The LCV bus transports volunteers and equipment around nature reserves throughout the Lothians, to perform a wide range of habitat management work. They regularly work on many local SWT reserves, and you may see their new bus out and about every weekend of the year, sporting the SWT logo in recognition of our donation.

Anyone who fancies a taste of practical volunteering can find more information about the wide range of day tasks on their website: lcv.org.uk. Any adult is welcome to book to come along on a task, meeting up with the minibus in central Edinburgh: it is free and fun! (Older teens are also welcome but may need to bring along a parent.)

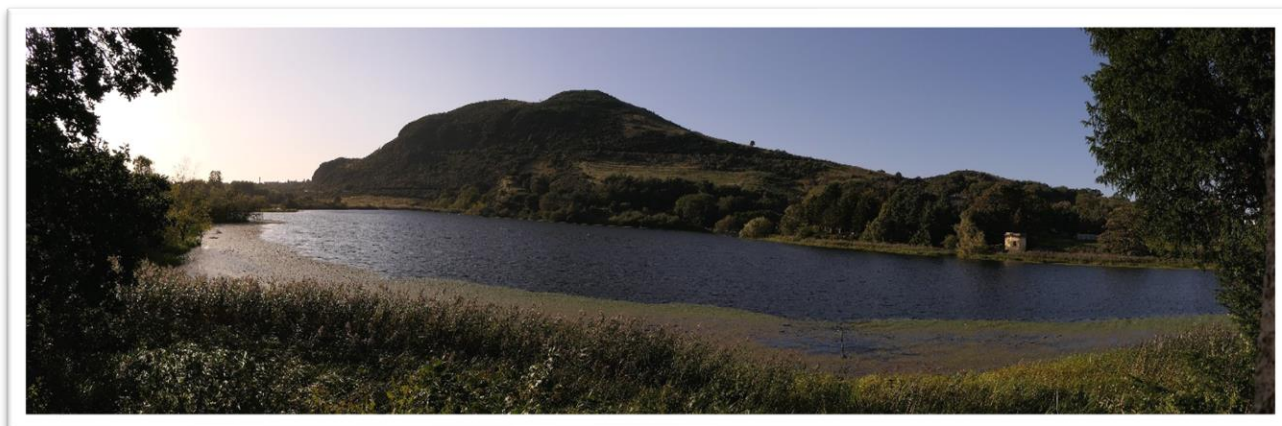
nurture the diversity of the species that ecosystem supports. However, the second is to provide the opportunity to educate and inform those people who support them. Many of the SWT Lothians reserves are very accessible to visit and to roam around, and Spring is one of the best times to get out and go see what your membership supports.

First to the **Red Moss Reserve by Balerno**. This is a raised peat bog so there are no paths over the main body of the reserve, however there is a board walk with interpretation signs on the south side of the reserve and there will be pond dipping and guided tours on the Open Day on July 23rd (12:00 to 17:00). However, any trip must also include a bird watching session on Threipmuir reservoir but rather than join everyone on the bridge, go find the Robin Aitken Bird Hide on the south side of Bavelaw Marsh which has now reopened post-Covid and is available 24/7 to the public.

Woodhall Dean in East Lothian is a 62 hectare reserve owned by the Scottish Wildlife Trust about 6kms south of Dunbar, with mainly Scottish native trees including some very old Ash and Oak. There is a circular path, steep and narrow in places, with bridges over the burn, seats to give you a bit of a rest, and an area at the ford to park the car. The reserve is contained within the narrow glens of a number of burns, principally the Woodhall Burn and the Weatherly Burn. Spring is a good time to visit as the Bluebells and other wild flowers will be looking good. The wildlife includes many woodland birds such as Nuthatch, Redstart and Woodpeckers. Roe Deer are plentiful and Badger evidence is everywhere. The views over East Lothian from the reserve are also spectacular on a good day. **Brock Wood** is quite close by, and also excellent for the spring woodland flowers. You'll be fascinated by the old waterworks and dam which used to supply Dunbar and are now derelict. This could combine industrial archaeology and natural history in one trip.

Over in West Lothian, **Tailend Moss** provides a good day out, there is a path around the reserve, but as you go round, have a closer look at the small ponds you'll go past. Sometimes the differences between them are obvious, some are out on the moss, some in the birch wood by the moss; but look closer, the hydrology changes between ponds, often between adjacent ponds, and this means the insect life and plant life by each can be quite different.

Also in West Lothian, **Hermund Birchwood** near West Calder has a good car park and a main circular walk with boardwalks over the muddier parts and a stile at the far end and lots of little paths to explore. There are a number of habitats within the ten hectares; woodlands of Beech, Birch and Pine, heathland, meadow and marsh. There is also wide variety of breeding birds due to the range of tree species and ages. The information board with a map near the entrance will help guide you round.



Of course, for Edinburgh residents, **Bawsinch** is right on the doorstep and includes areas of mixed woodland, scrub, grassland and reedbeds. The hide looks out over Duddingston loch but to access the reserve and the hide, you'll need to apply to SWT HQ for a key

Last to **Roslin Glen**, a large woodland reserve in Midlothian. There are no paths north of the road that runs through the reserve, only to the south, but of course, the reserve is only part of the glen. My favourite walks include getting to Roslin up the river from Springfield Mill near Polton or down the river from Penicuik along the railway path and through the country park. If you are in that area, Milkhall Pond is quite close, but you'll walk through that reserve in under five minutes. However, if you go sit quietly in the trees to the East of the main reservoir, and wait you'll probably be rewarded with a sight of the Dabchicks coming out into the open water. They are very shy, you'll need patience.

This brief note only covers a few of the Lothian's reserves. Details of all of them and directions to find them can be seen at <https://swtlothians.org.uk/reserves/>

Finally, the usual caveats must apply. When you visit, please do respect each reserve for what it is - a wildlife haven - it's not a family picnic site, or a dog walking space. It's a place where a habitat is preserved through conservation, protection and management. Our pleasure comes from observing and understanding what is happening and what is living in that space.

Young Leaders go snorkelling- by Gillian Hatcher

The Scottish Wildlife Trust's Young Leaders (20-30 years old) have been spending time in North Berwick, helping to promote one of the Trust's latest snorkel trails located just outside the Scottish Seabird Centre. The trail is one of five snorkel trails located in East Lothian, with others at Gullane Bents, Yellowcraig, Milsey Bay and Dunbar. You can find out more about snorkel trails in East Lothian at www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/things-to-do/snorkel-trails/

Meanwhile, the Roslin Glen Wildlife Watch Group is fully back up and running after its lockdown hiatus. Children aged 8-12 are welcome to join for outdoor games, nature crafting, minibeast hunts and more! The group meets on the third Sunday of the month at Roslin Glen County Park, find out more at www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/watch-group/roslin-glen-wildlife-watch-group/

Red Moss and Bavelaw Lichens Walk – 30th June 2022 - by Colin Shepperd

Following her excellent Zoom presentation to the Group in March, we had arranged an evening outing with Dr Rebecca Yahr of RBGE to explore some of the lichens found in the Red Moss area and so it was that a group of 19 people met up at the Threipmuir carpark at 6pm on a beautifully calm Thursday evening at the end of last June. We were lucky that the predicted rain showers did not materialise although the midges were a bit of a problem!

We started by exploring an area of mixed woodland beside the carpark where Becky pointed out a vivid orange lichen (*Xanthoria*) growing on the trunk of an aspen tree. The presence of this species is indicative of elevated levels of nitrogen and it occurs widely on rocks at the seaside, but in inland locations it is associated with an excess use of fertilisers on agricultural land. The bark of aspen is naturally nutrient rich however, so this lichen is commonly found there.

As we moved through the woodland Becky pointed out examples of each of the three main structural forms of

lichen; crustose (crust forming), foliose (leaflike) and fruticose (shrubby or bushy). Amongst the foliose varieties on the birch branches was one called *Parmelia*, with a network of fine white lines and cracks on its surface.

Most of the trees in the woodland were relatively young and, due to the

lichens' slow growth rates and short dispersal mechanisms, the range to be found on any individual tree was limited. However, Becky suddenly darted off the path as she had spotted a significantly older birch tree in an open glade, perhaps around 100 years old, which was home to a much wider diversity of both lichens and mosses. Due to the prevailing wind direction the tree also had a distinct lean towards the northeast and this created differing microclimates on opposite sides of the trunk, with the northeast face being much drier, giving rise to distinct communities on either side.



The group then moved down to the Redford Bridge where the stonework was home to a range of crustose lichens, including one which leached the iron content from the rock, which then oxidised, giving it a rusty red colour. A particular highlight was the discovery by one of the participants of a tiny green lichen which Becky identified as *Thelocarpon coccosporum*, which had not been previously recorded in the area. .

Finally we walked out along the boardwalk over the Moss proper where we saw various ground-growing lichens, including Reindeer Moss, which according to Becky should more correctly be called Reindeer Lichen. This member of the *Cladonia* family grows widely in heathland and mountain top locations and produces a bright red fruiting body within a cuplike structure, endearingly known as ‘jam tarts’.

The walk and talk proved to be fascinating introduction to the mysterious world of lichens. For those who wish to learn more, Becky is currently working on a beginner’s ID book which she hopes will be published within the next couple of years.

If you have anything you would like to contribute to future editions of Lothian Talk, please get in touch via email at editor@swtlothians.org.uk

