

Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians Group- Chair's Report 2025

By Nicholas Warren (Chair)

Notes on the Committee

Following the successful trial which merged the main and events committee, we now have two committees to help run this group.

The main committee key responsibilities are to oversee the activities of the SWT Lothians Group, monitor possible planning development affecting Local Biodiversity Sites across the Lothians, organises all the outdoor events, winter lectures, produces the Lothian Talk newsletter, maintain our website and social media presence, fundraise; represent the Trust at local external events, manage the groups finance, allocate available financial resources, and organise and run the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

While, the reserve committee offers an overview of the management of the Trust's Lothian wildlife reserves from the perspective of volunteer reserve convenors mainly by compiling reserve annual reports and meeting annually.

We would like to express our thanks to the members of all committees for all their hard work over the past year.

'Walks and Talks'

Over the past twelve months, we organised 15 events, nine of these were outings, the other six were organised talks which took place at the Cornerstone Centre off Princes street, Edinburgh or online.

- 25-04-2024 - Guided walks along the river Esk with the Forth Rivers Trust.
- 18-05-2024 - Visit to the Trust's Woodhall Dean Wildlife reserve.
- 15-06-2024- Open day at the Trust's Johnston Terrace reserve.
- 13-07-2024 - Morning moth trapping at Redmoth of Balerno with Mark Cubitt.
- 28-07-2024 – Open day at the Trust's Red Moss of Balerno reserve, celebrating International Bog Day.
- 04-08-2024 - Guide walk at the Trust's Bawsinch reserve.
- 05-09-2024 - Observing Bats at Blackford Pond with Natalie Todman.
- 12-10-2024 - Guided walk through the Aberlady local nature reserve to spot geese, with Reserve Manager John Harrison.
- 17-10-2024 – A winter evening talk on the Restoration Forth Project by Eleri Williams, Seagrass Officer at the Scottish Seabird Centre.

- 21-11-2024 – Online talk on Saving Scotland's Red Squirrel by Katie Berry¹
- 05-12-2024 – A winter evening talk to learn about our local bats with Natalie Todman
- 20-02-2025 - Online talk on "Making Peace with Nature: what, why, and how? with Dr Julian Caldecott SWT Trustee¹
- 20-03-2025 – A winter evening talk on the Riverwoods Blue Print - Creating a network of thriving riverbank woodlands and healthy river systems across Scotland with Nicole Still
- 24-04-2025 – A winter talk on surveying Local Biodiversity Sites in the Lothians with Ben Averis. (post AGM talk).

Sadly because of illness the birdwatching outing to Levenhall Links and Musselburgh Lagoons scheduled for 29-03-2025 had to be rescheduled for a later date.

Lothian Talk. We continue and wish to continue to offer two formats for our newsletter. The two-page paper format is sent alongside the magazine to all SWT members in the Lothians, while an extended electronic version may be received by email or read on this group's website.

This newsletter is sent out 3 times a year to over 12,000 members (over 6,000 memberships) in the Lothians.

Special thanks go to our editor, Alison, for her work in putting this information together.

Website, Facebook, and Instagram. After several years in her role as webmaster, Ruth Palmer stepped down from this position when she moved away from the Lothians. Her role was taken up by a new group member, Colin Murray, who has since been busy reorganising a lot of the back pages and tackling many of the idiosyncrasies of our webpage. He is now turning his attention to the content, so expect updates there.

After a number of discussions on the topic, we have opted to pause our Facebook and Instagram accounts. These required greater levels of input than this group had appetite for.

Planning Matters

Few Local Biodiversity Sites have been directly threatened by developments in the Lothians this year thanks to their protected status under Local Authority Local Development Plans including a new one finished for the City of Edinburgh area to 2030. The exception being



¹ <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/things-to-do/watch-wildlife-online/online-talks/>

the Roseburn path LBS' in CEC which is threatened by a Tram option. Local members are active in trying to protect it - <https://www.savetheroseburnpath.com/>.

We keep on supporting the councils across the Lothians to assess their local biodiversity sites and keep the information on each site current. This year, we and many SWT member volunteers have offered greater support to the East Lothian Council to bring the information on their LBS' up to date.

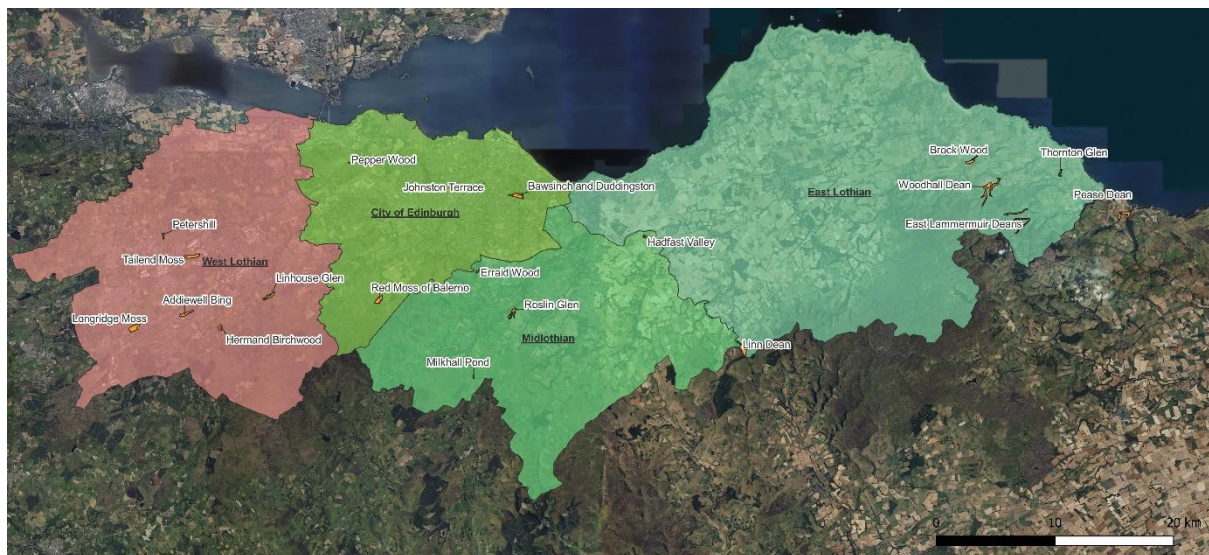
We continue to have a Service Level Agreement with TWIC (The Wildlife Information Centre) through which we continue to support their Local Biodiversity Sites surveys financially but in a way that we can afford.

We must thank the never-ending work of the area planning representatives including Tim Duffy and Susan Manson.

We would like at least two more areas representatives and shall try hard to recruit and train such volunteers interested in the planning issues affecting our Local Biodiversity Sites and Reserves.

To read more about their work in your area do not forget to read the online PDF version of Lothian Talk which can contains more planning issues than the 2-page paper version.

Reserves Committee



The Reserves Management Group offers a volunteer perspective on the 19 Scottish Wildlife trust reserves in the Lothians and Pease Dean in Berwickshire. The committee had its annual meeting on the 25th of February 2025.

Of note is the future disposal of Pepper Wood, a site just over a hectare in size, managed but not owned by the Trust. This decision was made following the Trust's review of its 113 reserves. The reduction in reserves will help staff and volunteers put more effort into

reserves where they can make a greater contribution to improving biodiversity by focusing on bigger reserves and also ones owned by the Trust.

Representing the trust at external events

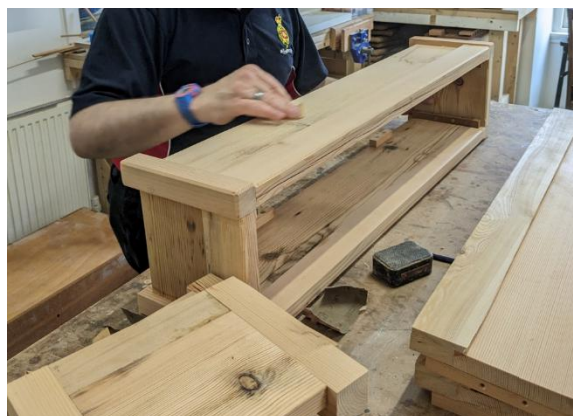
In the past this has also been part of our remit but is something we have nothing to report on. Maybe it is something the events committee could look at this year.

Nextdoor Nature Projects

The Lothians Group secured funding through SWT's Nextdoor Nature initiative to run two projects which ended this year.

The aim of the Nextdoor Nature initiative was to deliver actions for nature in partnership with existing community groups or organisations embedded within communities. It was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The first collaborated with the Grassmarket Community Project (GCP) and used its wood workshop group to design and build wooden window boxes which the GCP's gardening group then filled with hardy plants that are good for pollinators. The boxes were then



distributed to the local community.

While the second project had the Lothians group work with the children at the Pilton Youth and Children's Project (PYCP) centre. This project ran from February to May 2024 and combined workshops on nature in and around the centre, with a trip to the Bass Rock gannet colony during the breeding season.



It has been a great experience co-creating these projects with the GCP & PYCP.

Finance & fundraising – see separate document

Our treasurer, Trevor, prepared the group accounts for this year.

Our group income comes from two main sources of fundraising. The first is can collections which Barbara Knowles organised at the local supermarkets (mainly Tesco). Can collection volunteers on the up which is great to see.

The second comes from the donations we receive for our organised events (walks & talks).

SWT Lothians Group Accounts for Year Ending 31 March 2025						
2023/2024		INCOME	2024/2025			
£	£		£	£		
2,360.23		Opening balance brought forward	2,721.86			
16.50		Donations, Open Days etc: cash	147.05			
24.57		Donations, Open Days etc: paypal	14.73			
1,402.41		Fundraising - can collections: cash	790.96			
135.56		Fundraising - can collections: paypal	91.37			
329.70		Indoor meetings: cash	375.49			
		Indoor meetings: paypal	54.01			
54.00		Donations Zoom meetings	923.50			
179.00		Event bookings: Eventbrite	228.30			
2,000.00		Next Door Nature Grants				
6,501.97			5,347.27			
		EXPENDITURE				
	450.00	The Wildlife Info Centre – SLA grant		475.00		
		Direct expenditure on SWT reserves		517.50		
	684.61	Printing Lothian Talk		715.66		
	101.76	ICT Expenses (Zoom & Wordpress)		45.91		
	62.50	Event Costs		55.00		
	865.30	Meeting Expenses		468.00		
	10.84	Refreshments @ events		44.25		
	65.10	Payment to LCV for Reserve volunteer work		76.75		
	1,540.00	Nextdoor Nature Grants		595.00		
		East Lothian Council Event Donation		48.80		
	3,780.11			3,041.87		
2,721.86		Actual balance in bank at year end	2,305.40			
		Adjustments for outstanding items/liabilities				
	0.00	Total Outstanding Liabilities carried over to following year		0.00		
2,721.86		Funds in hand 31 March (Bank Balance - Liabilities)	2,305.40			
		Funds Restricted for next accounting year				
	0.00	Total Restricted Funds		0.00		
2,721.86		Balance of unrestricted funds carried forward to following year	2,305.40			
		Trevor Paterson				
		Treasurer				
		SWT Lothians Group				

Proposed Committee Members for the next year

There are some changes to report on this year. Nick Warren is stepping down as chair.

We said farewell to Catherine Sturrock, Ruth Palmer, and Jo Doake.

SWT Lothians COMMITTEE adopted at the AGM on 24th April 2025.

Chair: Tim Duffy

Vice Chair: Colin Murray

Secretary: Alison Edelsten

Treasurer: Trevor Paterson

Planning Secretary: Tim Duffy

Events Coordinator – Colin Shepherd

Fundraising Coordinator Barbara Knowles with support from the Treasurer.

Publicity, Editor 'Lothian Talk': Alison Edelsten

Webmaster: Colin Murray

Social Media – Facebook & Instagram – Vacant – put on hold.

Ordinary members: Nicholas Warren, Kate Walters

Reserve Convenors Group Chair Nicholas Warren

Ex Officio Members:

SWT Lothians Reserves Manager Julian Warman

Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or wish to join us as a volunteer on the committees or to do more hands-on work on the reserves.