



Lothian Talk

Scottish Wildlife Trust: Lothians Group Newsletter Autumn 2025

Autumn and Winter Events

Full details are on <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/>

The venue is The Cornerstone (unless specified as Zoom) and the timing is 7.30-9pm. Tea/Coffee provided.

Thursday 13th November

Three Words for Forest – a film and speakers Dr Rachel Clive and Prof. Dee Heddon. Challenges, complexities, hopes and fears of working with trees and forests in a time of climate crisis.

Tuesday 16th December – SWT HQ will talk about the plans for the recent purchase of the Inverbroom Estate, its largest ever acquisition. **Note: It's a Tuesday in the church itself.**

Thursday 19th February – A talk about Levenhall Links by Kristian Purchase, East Lothian Council Ranger.

Thursday 19th March – Karen Chambers and Leonie Alexander from Edinburgh Shoreline will talk about their work in a range of marine supporting projects.

Thursday 16th April – AGM followed by a talk on Nature and planning around the Lothians region by Tim Duffy.

We will send out Eventbrite booking info by email before the event. In person events are held at The Cornerstone Centre, St Johns Church, Lothian Road/Princes Street Corner (EH2 4BJ). Events are free and donations are most welcome to support the hall costs.

Full details of all events are also available online at [Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians \(swtlothians.org.uk\)](http://Scottish Wildlife Trust Lothians (swtlothians.org.uk))

Search **swtlothians** to find our website

From the Chair – Dr Tim Duffy

It has been a very busy time this summer not just with the wildlife and nature conservation activities and actions of the committee and other active members, that you will read about in this two page hardcopy summary version of the newsletter and the full PDF version (also on swtlothians.org.uk). If you believe you have never received an email from us with a web link to the PDF version then please send your email address (and membership number if possible) to webmaster@swtlothians.org.uk. Your email will be sent to SWT HQ where they will administer it under GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) rules for which they are responsible, and we can then ask them to email our Lothians actual membership (currently more than 6000 memberships) with information such as this.

There are many benefits to subscribing SWT members to being emailable by the Lothians Group in this way - it is a benefit of being an actual SWT member in the Lothians. For a long time now HQ have been reporting that maybe as much as 40% of our members are not contactable in this way until you have explicitly confirmed/re-confirmed that your email address can be used for contact from the Lothians Group. There are historical reasons why this has happened but you 40% can sort this very quickly in this way if you wish. One of my Vice Chairs – Colin Murray – has been revolutionising our website and other technical e-communication systems and I thank him for all his hard work. I also wish to thank Alison Edelstein who has stepped down from being Lothian Talk Editor for more than a year, and this leads to an exciting new opportunity for any budding newsletter editors out there!

Planning Matters

East Lothian

The public consultation on the new East Lothian Council's draft Biodiversity Action Plan will have finished by the time you read this but as an important meeting regarding progress on the council's East Lothian Local Biodiversity Site Habitat and priority species survey – which many of you have been helping with – will just miss the production of this hardcopy newsletter. Read all about it in the PDF version which should be in your email, if we are allowed to use your email address, about the time the Trust magazine hits your doormat.

Midlothian

We are absolutely delighted to announce that Alison Macfadyen has responded to our appeal for planning representatives in each of the 4 Lothian councils (all posts currently empty with myself covering for them!) and she is now trained and up and running watching planning applications that might affect the Midlothian Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS). If you live in Midlothian and know of any planning issues that might affect such LBS or nature reserves etc. you are invited to contact her directly on alimac0707@gmail.com. In future there may be another email to use.

West Lothian

We are still looking for a West Lothian planning representative but meanwhile the relatively well staffed West Lothian council Ecology and Biodiversity team is forging ahead on all fronts with great progress.

City of Edinburgh Council

We are still looking for a planning representative here which is a simpler job, in that the council will write to you if there is a planning application that affects or is near an LBS. The LBS are very well protected in the new Local Plan and so very few applications possibly affect a designated LBS. The only problem is when a council department, other than the planning department, tries to give itself planning permission or promotes a development as existing policy that affects a LBS. The second council public consultation on the now infamous plan to use the Roseburn Path LBS (designated and protected strongly in the brand new local AND previous local plans) as a new tramway segment ends on 17th November.

See <https://www.savetheroseburnpath.com/> for more information. We will continue objecting on the grounds that instead of offering one route on existing roads and one on this disused railway path as the options to choose from, neither options should have included Roseburn Path LBS i.e. both options should have been on existing road routes. The latest Local Plan does for historical legal reasons, includes a policy that safeguards the Roseburn Path disused railway LBS for **potential** use in the future as a transport corridor due to legislation from 2006. We argue that all local plans and Scottish government National Planning Policy Framework 4 (NPF4) since that date i.e. the modern view on biodiversity and greenspaces, makes the 2006 policy contradictory and completely out of date and irrelevant.

Tim Duffy, planning secretary,
planning@swtlothians.org.uk

Newsletter editor – Appeal for a volunteer

The Lothians Group committee has decided to focus on producing the longer version of Lothian Talk in PDF form (historically this has been 4 to 6 pages but many such organisations produce longer ones including pictures etc.) with a semi-automatic system for summarising down to the two page hardcopy version that all SWT actual members get inside their Scottish Wildlife Trust magazine. We cannot afford to hardcopy print more

than a single double-sided page these days. Please be clear the cost of such hardcopies comes entirely from our local volunteer charitable fund raising activities. SWT HQ have never been able to afford a subsidy for this. We have created the technical solutions to such a two stage but largely only ‘edit once’ system and webmaster for our group Colin Murray offers training in the use of the word processing templates he has created and if necessary the appropriate software licence will be provided. The Committee writes the newsletter and anybody wanting to creatively offer relevant articles for SWT Lothians members are encouraged to contribute. Editorial control rests with the committee.

If you would like to talk to Colin about this please email him using webmaster@swtlothians.org.uk. He has tested his system – because he has produced the autumn Lothian Talk that you are reading!

Woodhall Dean Reserve Walk Report 17th May

17 people gathered in good weather for a guided walk through the reserve, a rare example on the Scottish east coast of an oakwood comprised of Sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*). Due to heavy grazing by Roe deer natural regeneration is limited, so SWT volunteers annually gather acorns to be grown-on, then planted out as young saplings along with many other Scottish native trees, resulting in a nicely varied habitat.

At the central bridge there is a wonderful specimen of the rare Wood vetch which was in full flower in May. The main indicator of ancient woodland is Dogs mercury which is evident in many areas, though with a dull green flower it is easily missed. Definitely not to be missed at that time of year is the magnificent display of native Bluebells! Approaching Bob and Betty’s bench, halfway round the main path, a Garden warbler serenaded the group and a “passing” Cuckoo did the same. The picnic stop at the bench was a welcome rest and there one of the participants spotted a Wall Brown butterfly – rare compared to the more common Speckled wood butterfly widely seen elsewhere on the reserve.

Finishing the walk a dead adder was inspected, road kill, unfortunately, but showing there is a presence of these rare snakes in the reserve. By Lesley Fairweather

There is much more on our Lothians website with our extended version of this Newsletter with photos and other news.

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