

April 2011

1. View of pond on a misty morning 24th April



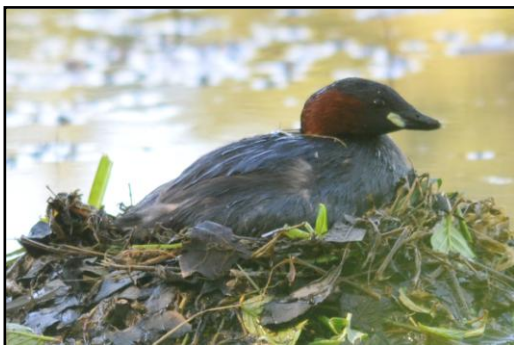
2. Confirmed wildlife sightings:

a. Birds:

Blackbird, Blackcap, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Collared Dove, Curlew, Dunnock, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Grey Heron, House Martin, Jay, Lesser Redpoll, Little Grebe, Mallard, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Oystercatcher, Pheasant, Raven, Robin, Siskin, Sparrowhawk, Swallow, Swift, Tawny Owl, Teal, Treecreeper, Tree Pipit, Willow Tit, Willow Warbler, Wood Pigeon, Wren, Yellowhammer.

On the 28th, Bobby Smith and Karen Miller who were able to identify 29 of these species from their call alone.

Unfortunately, the Teal decided not to breed at the Reserve and flew off on the 4th of April. After several attempts at finding a suitable nest site, the Little Grebe finally settled on a spot near the sluice gate. At the end of the month the parents were taking it in turn to incubate 5 eggs.



One reason the Little Grebe moved their nest site was because they didn't want their chicks taken by the Grey Heron. The heron was, by then, visiting the pond quite regularly to seek out a meal. One day it was spotted taking two adult newts in quick succession.

The first Swallow arrived on the 13th of April.

b. Mammals:

The mammal species seen this month are: Bank Vole, Brown Hare, Mole, Rabbit, Red Squirrel, Roe Deer, Short-tailed Vole, Stoat, Woodmouse.

Which small mammal was this one on the right emerging from below the boardwalk?



c. Amphibians and Reptiles:

At the edge of the pond the frog and toad tadpoles can be seen swimming in their thousands. However, many will be killed over the next few months by a whole range of predators, including leeches.



Tadpoles at the edge of the pond



Leech feeding on a tadpole

The Common Lizard was seen basking in the sun on a sphagnum tussock.

d. Insects:

Butterflies

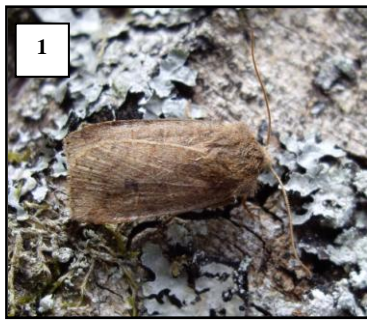


These photographs of the Peacock (1), Comma (2), Red Admiral (3), Orange-Tip (4) and Green-veined White were all taken this month. A Small Tortoiseshell was also seen but not photographed.

Moths

On the 14th of April Peter Norman led a Moth Identification Workshop at the Reserve. Four moth traps were set out the night before. This was the first time we had set out moth traps in April and we identified 7 species of macro-moth and one micro-moth that we had not seen before:

The Chestnut (1), Clouded Drab (2), Common Quaker (3), Dark Sword-grass (4), Pine Beauty (5), Powdered Quaker (6) and Twin-spotted Quaker (7).



The Micro-moth, *Diurnea fagella*, was also found the same day and by Alison Robertson the day before.

Alison will lead the next moth ID workshop on 16th May.



e. Ladybirds:

Several common 7-spot ladybirds were found at the Reserve during the month. Only one other species was observed, an Eyed Ladybird, on one of the interpretation boards.



f. Other insects:

Can you identify these insects?



g. Pond Animals:

During the **Dumfries and Galloway Wildlife Festival** the pond organisms were studied on two occasions. The following types of invertebrates were found:

Cased Caddis larvae (3 species), *Cyclops* sp., Damselfly nymphs (2 species), *Daphnia* sp., Diving Beetles (2 species), Diving Beetle larvae, Leeches (2 species), Lesser Water Boatman, Mayfly nymphs (3 species), Midge larvae (2 species), Mosquito pupae, Pea Mussel, Pond Snail (2 species), Pond Snail eggs, Water Mites (2 species), Worms (2 species).

Pond Vertebrates:

Fish: Three-spined Stickleback; Amphibians: Palmate Newt, Frog, Toad and their larvae.

h. Plants

On the 24th of April, Liz Kungu kindly identified as many bryophytes as she could whilst walking through South Turnmuir Plantation and the Nature Reserve. She found 32 species of moss and 13 species of liverworts. A list of the species she found is available to anyone who is interested.

Ron Lewis-Smith helped the Reserve Manager identify the types of 'wild' hyacinth growing within the Reserve. There turned out to be very few native wild hyacinths (if any), most were a Spanish variety or a hybrid. This being the case there is little point in removing the foreign varieties – and they do provide a splash of colour in the spring. Several new plants have appeared along the sides of the paths. If anyone knows who is planting these bulbs could they please let the Manager know.

i. Fungi

This month the fruiting bodies of a few fungi were visible, including one not previously seen at the Reserve called the **False Morel (Turban Fungus) *Gyromitra esculenta***.

Appearance: The fruiting body has distinct stem and cap sections. The cap is dark brown or red-brown and has a lobed, sinuous surface and a brain-like structure. It can be 8-10cm wide and is not hollow. Below the cap the whitish stem is very bent and has vertical holds; it is partly hollow.



Flesh: A pleasant aromatic smell; firm, especially in the stem. Flesh of the cap is more brittle.

Distribution: Mainly in spruce woodland, on sandy soils; normally in droves.

Edibility: Contains the poison gyromitrin, which is not rendered harmless by cooking, as is often reported. Frequent consumption has caused many deaths.

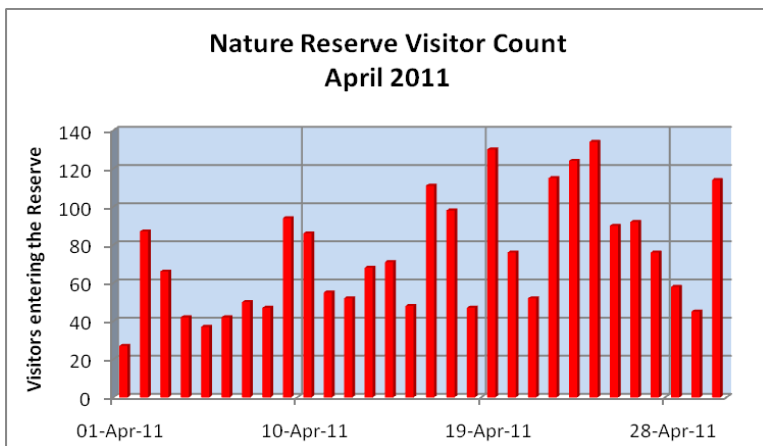
Similar species: Pouched False Morel (*gyromitra infula*) is also thought to be poisonous and grows in coniferous woodland, but typically grows in autumn.

3. Activities held as part of the Dumfries and Galloway Wildlife Festival:

The **Film Nights, Wildlife Story Time, Water Wonders Pond Dipping** and **Moth Trapping** were all enjoyed by the small numbers who attended each one. There was no demand for the **Guided Walks**. The above events were advertised in the Countryside Events and Wildlife Festival booklets. In future posters will be put up locally to promote such events and hopefully boost the numbers.

4. Visitor Records:

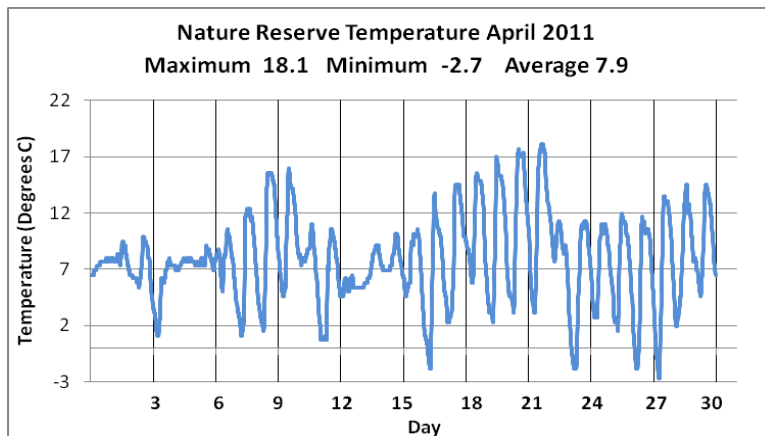
| Month | Total number of Visitors | Daily Average Visitors |
|----------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| December | 1251 | 40 |
| January | 1472 | 47 |
| February | 1603 | 57 |
| March | 1866 | 60 |
| April | 2234 | 74 |



5. Weather Records:

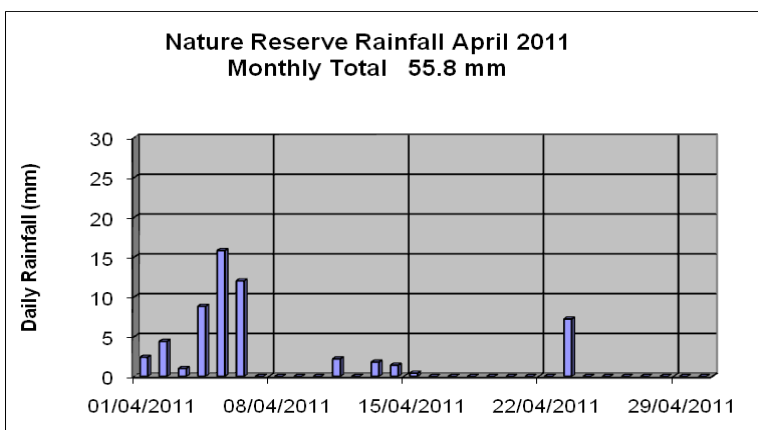
a. Air temperature

| Month | Maximum | Minimum | Average |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|
| November | 5.4 | -8.7 | -1.3 |
| December | 2.3 | -17.6 | -6.5 |
| January | 5.4 | -9.2 | -1.5 |
| February | 7.7 | -4.4 | 1.7 |
| March | 11.0 | -6.3 | 2.6 |
| April | 18.1 | -2.7 | 7.9 |



b. Precipitation

| Month | Rainfall (mm) |
|----------|---------------|
| November | 57 |
| December | 29.7 |
| January | 108.8 |
| February | 189.6 |
| March | 71.9 |
| April | 55.8 |

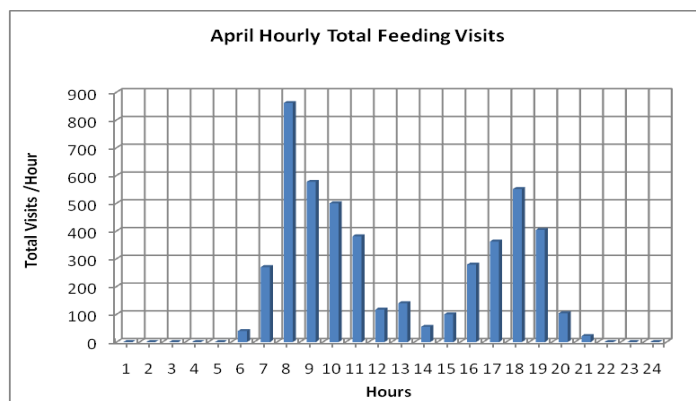


6. Monitoring Red Squirrel Feeding Behaviour

Graph 1 – Total number of visits made to the feeder each hour of the day during April.

Once again the timings of the two distinct peaks of feeding activity have changed. The first was between 8.00 and 9.00am and is now at 8.00am. The second was between 4.00 and 5.00pm and is now at 6.00pm.

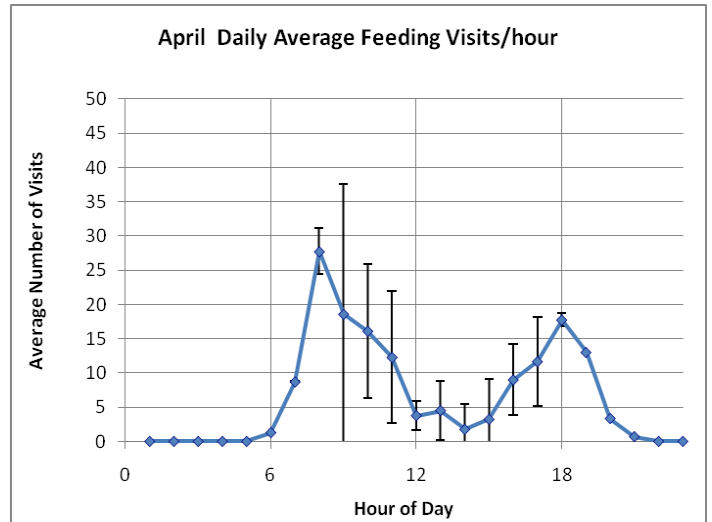
The squirrels are continuing to take advantage of the longer days by starting to feed earlier and finishing feeding later than in March.



Graph 2 – The average number of visits per hour during April.

This month there was again a drop in the number of times the red squirrels came to the nut feeder; this time during both the morning and the afternoon peak feeding times.

On several warm days during the month the cones on the pine trees were heard to pop as they dried out and opened up. This resulted in the naked seeds within the cones being more readily available to the squirrels. At a time when the young squirrels are growing fast they have an abundance of their preferred food.



7. Maintenance work

On Good Friday some visitors went down the ramp to look at the tadpoles and one of the supporting timbers cracked. Over the Easter weekend the ramp was detached from the jetty and floated across to the bank where it was dismantled. Thanks are due to Chris Trott who helped with this task.



8. School Groups

Applegarth Primary

On the 19th of April pupils from Applegarth Primary School visited the reserve to investigate minibeasts in the grassland and heathland with Ross Gemmell and in the pond with Jim Rae. Photographs were taken of the mini-beasts and each pupil then went back to school to write a report on what he or she had learned.

Lockerbie Academy



20th April - Gordon Ferrie brought two visiting primary Teachers from Malawi down to the Reserve.



26th April -S1 Environmental Studies class fitted new boards along the Reserve path to replace the old, rotten boards.



28th April -S2 Environmental Studies class painted the new steps on the boardwalk.

Answers to questions will be given in next month's bulletin.