

May 2011

1. Views of pond in late May.



Birch tree blown down - 23 May



Branch removed and stump raised – 24 May

2. Confirmed wildlife sightings:

a. Birds:

Blackbird, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Cuckoo, Garden Warbler, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose, House Martin, Jay, Little Grebe, Mallard, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Raven, Red Kite, Robin, Siskin, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Swallow, Swift, Tawny Owl, Willow Tit, Willow Warbler, Wood Pigeon, Wren, Yellowhammer.

The Little Grebes have had a very difficult spring and are now attempting to build their 6th or 7th nest.

Unfortunately none of the water birds was successful in rearing any young this month. It would appear that one predator or another, mainly the crows, took the eggs or young before they left the nests. There may be a case for controlling the numbers of crows in future.

The birds that used the nest boxes had much better luck. Nuthatch, Great Tit and Blue Tit were all successful in rearing their young. Video footage was obtained of the development of the Blue Tits in a nest box on the north wall of the Centre.



Greylag Geese on pond 18th May



Young Great Tit chicks in nestbox

b. Mammals:

At least 5 young squirrels were spotted this month, exhibiting a great variation in colours, dark-red (nearly black in patches), rich orange-red and creamy-red with a white underparts. The adults are shedding their winter coats.

The mice and bank voles have also multiplied.



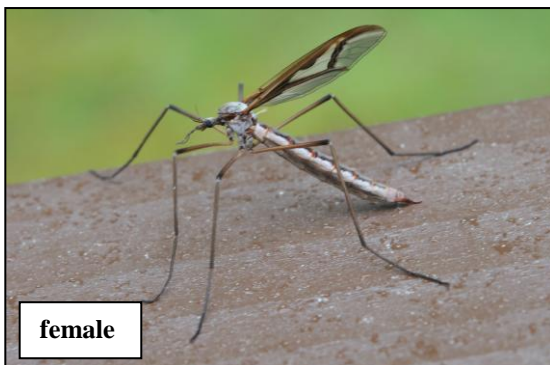
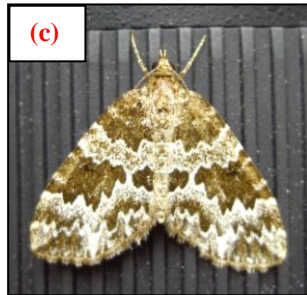
c. **Amphibians and Reptiles:**

Many frog tadpoles are much larger than most of the toad tadpoles and have well developed legs. They will be ready to leave the pond in June. Visitors to the Reserve should take great care in late June and throughout July because there will be hundreds of froglets and toadlets crossing the path.

d. **Insects:**

On the 15th of May Alison Robertson kindly helped at the moth workshop to identify the following species: **Brown Silver-line**, **Broken-barred Carpet (c)**, **Buff Ermine**, **Brown Silver-line**, **Cinnabar**, **Clouded Silver**, **Common Carpet**, **Common Lutestring**, **Common Pug**, **Common Quaker**, **Coxcomb Prominent**, **Cream Wave**, **Engrailed**, **Flame Carpet**, **Hebrew Character**, **Iron Prominent (a)**, **Mottled Pug (b)**, **Nut Tree Tussock**, **Scalloped Hazel**, **Small Phoenix**, **Spruce Carpet**, **Riband Wave**, **Small Square-spot**, **Streamer (d)**, **Tawny-barred Angle (e)** and **Water Carpet**.

Those highlighted in red are new species for the Eskrigg Reserve.



This cream-spot ladybird (*Calvia 14-guttata*) was found on a hawthorn tree along the boardwalk on the 27th.



Several wasps nests have been found in the heathland area and attached to the shelter like the one above.

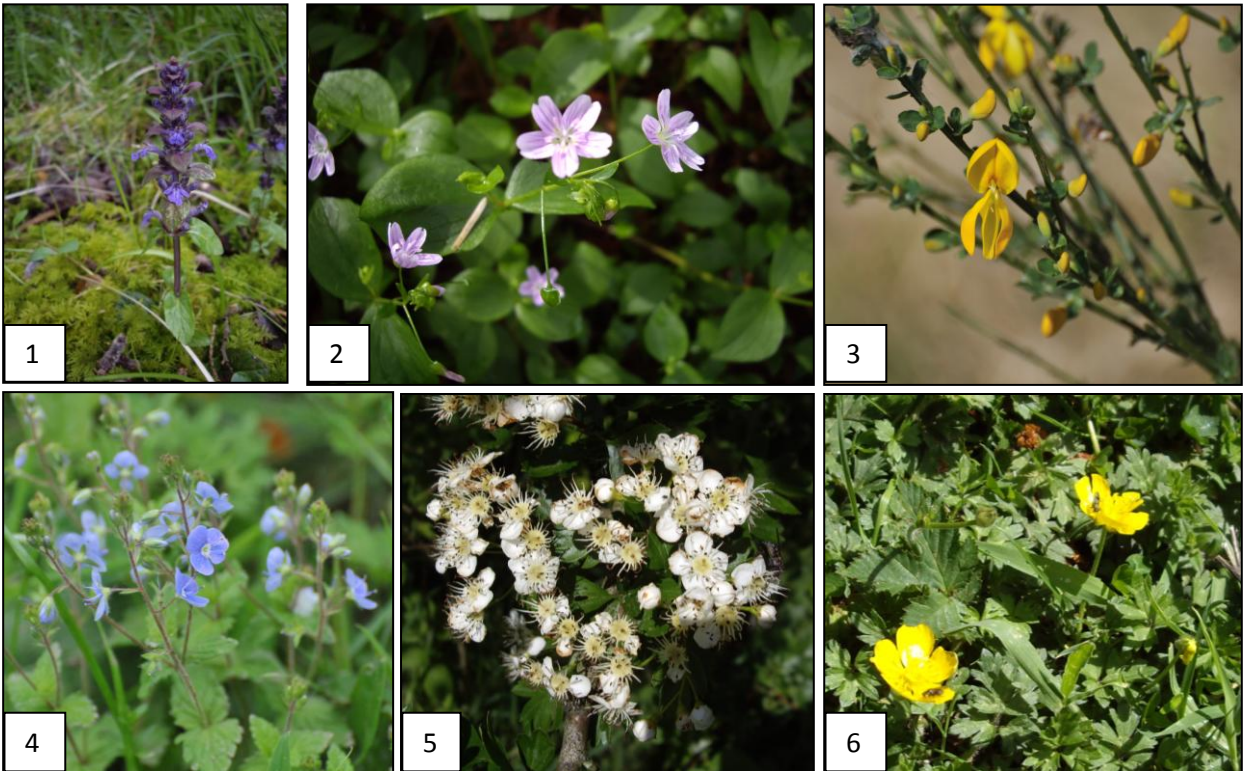
Male and female specimens of one of the largest crane-flies, *Tipila maxima*, was spotted on the 15th.

Large numbers of midges, mayflies, stoneflies and caddis flies have emerged from the pond, helping to feed the swallows and house martins.

Can anyone identify the caterpillar shown opposite?



e. A few of the flowering plants seen this month.



1. Bugle 2. Pink Purslane 3. Broom 4. Heath Speedwell 5. Hawthorn 6. Creeping Buttercup

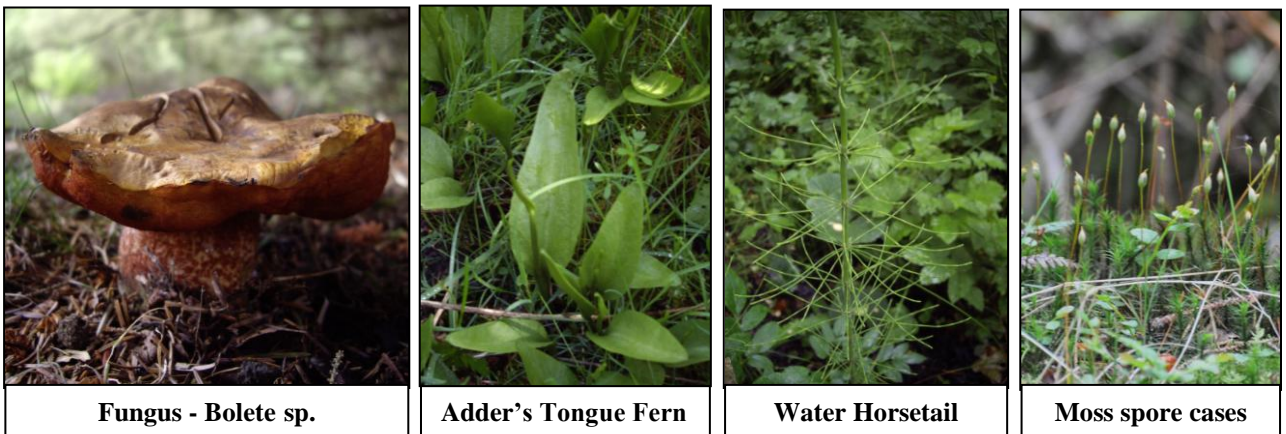
f. Oak Apple Galls

These are seen between May and June. They are home to the larvae of the oak apple gall wasp (*Biorhiza pallida*). The female lays her eggs in the leaf bud causing the oak tree to produce this apple-like growth. The gall can grow to about 4cms. in diameter, and inside there are around thirty chambers each containing one wasp larvae. If you cut an old one in half you can see the tunnels where the larvae chewed their way out. The succulent galls are eaten by a variety of organisms.



The 29th of May is traditionally 'Oak Apple Day' in Britain, which celebrates Charles II's return to England in May 1660.

g. Some non-flowering plants seen this month:



Fungus - Bolete sp.

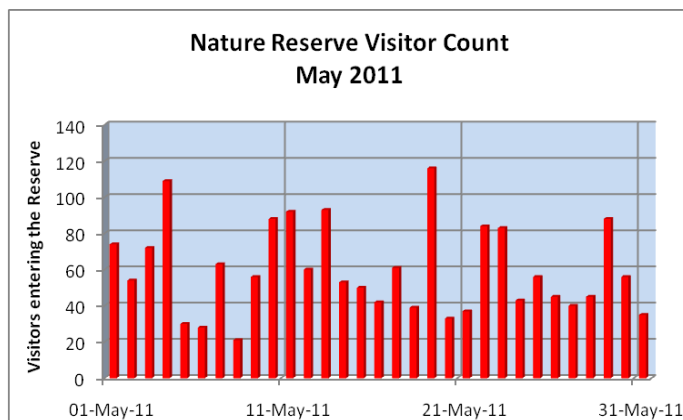
Adder's Tongue Fern

Water Horsetail

Moss spore cases

3. Visitor Records:

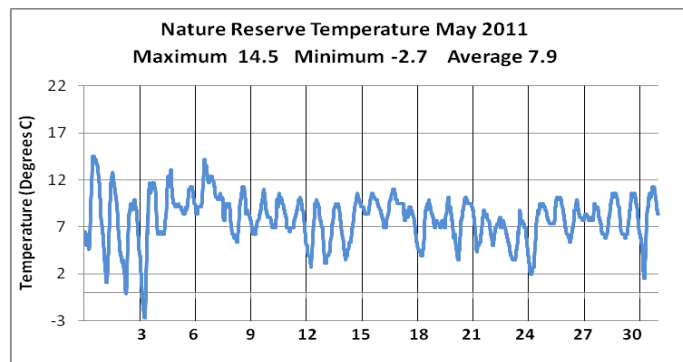
Month	Total number of Visitors	Daily Average Visitors
December	1251	40
January	1472	47
February	1603	57
March	1866	60
April	2234	74
May	1846	60



4. Weather Records:

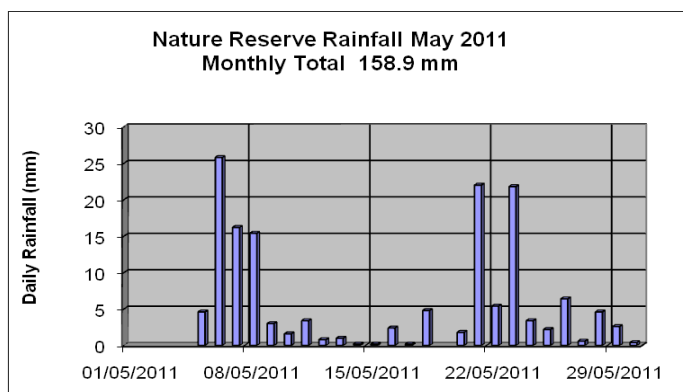
a. Air temperature

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
May	14.5	-2.7	7.9

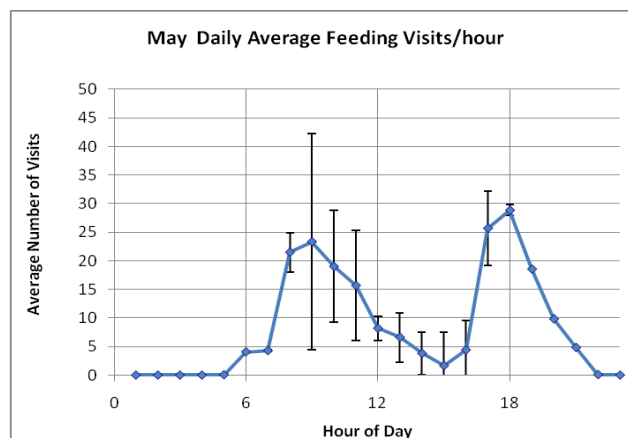
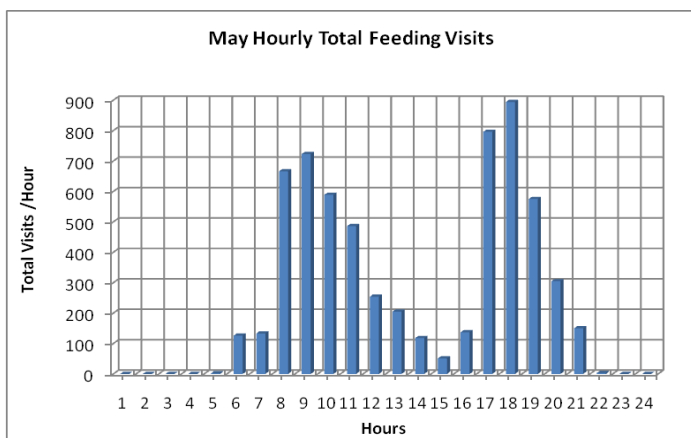


b. Precipitation

Month	Rainfall (mm)
November	57
December	29.7
January	108.8
February	189.6
March	71.9
April	55.8
May	158.9



5. Monitoring Red Squirrel Feeding Behaviour



The peak feeding times are 7.00-9.00am and 4.00-6.00pm.

Several of the squirrels have been feeding regularly at the sunflower heart and bird seed feeders. In doing so a number of feeders have been chewed or broken and had to be replaced.

6. Maintenance work – Volunteer Assistance



Chris Trott clearing silt trap 01.05.11



Andy Aitken clearing willow 09.05.11



Pixie seats repaired 24.05.11



Watergate, gate and fences repaired by Castle Milk Estate 21.05.11

During the month more boards were replaced alongside the Reserve path and the entrance at Dryfesdale Lodge Visitors' Centre strimmed. On the Maintenance Day many of the potholes on the forest road between the Dumfries Road and the Reserve were filled with gravel.

7. Photography Training Day:

On the 4th of May, Keith Kirk (Ranger and wildlife photographer with Dumfries and Galloway Council) ran a workshop entitled 'A General Introduction to Wildlife Photography for the digital SLR user' at the Eskrigg Centre. The event was well supported and found very useful by all participants.

8. School Activities:

1st and 2nd year Environmental Studies pupils from Lockerbie Academy came down on the 26th of May and took part in the 'Eskrigg Junior Challenge'. The students had to find 6 specific wildlife artefacts and identify the three chainsaw carvings. All pupils completed the challenge successfully and were awarded the appropriate certificate.

Notes:

- Readers are reminded to submit their wildlife photographs for the 2012 calendar by September.
- The Trust's 'Wildlife Weekend' takes place on Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th July.
- The Lockerbie Wildlife Trust exhibit at the Dryfesdale Lodge Visitors' Centre will continue to be displayed for the next few months.
- People with mobility problems who wish to visit the Reserve should contact the Reserve Manager Jim Rae (**07739 987 009**) if they wish assistance.