

March 2011

1. View of pond in mid-March



2. Confirmed wildlife sightings:

a. Birds:

Blackbird, Blue Tit, Brambling, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Lesser Redpoll, Little Grebe, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Raven, Robin, Siskin, Sparrowhawk, Teal, Treecreeper, Willow Tit, Wood Pigeon, Wren, Yellowhammer.

A Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) was spotted on the 23rd of March in the willows next to the picnic area.



Note the new residents at the Reserve - a pair of adult Teal (*Anas crecca*), first spotted by George Trudt on the 26th of March. This is the smallest British duck and is a familiar site in winter on estuaries, mudflats and inland wetlands, particularly where they are protected from hunting. They are nervous and flighty, taking to the wing at the slightest sign of danger. It is hoped they will stay to breed.



Adult male Teal



Adult female Teal

The Little Grebe, which returned to the Reserve last month, have started to build a nest. They have made three attempts so far in different parts of the pond. Changes in water level forced them to abandon the first two attempts.

Another visitor to the pond, for about 10 days in mid-March, was a Black East Indian Duck. This was not a wild duck but one which sought a change from its normal home at Eskrigg Farm.



b. Mammals:



This month Roe deer were quite often seen in various parts of the woods. At least two hinds are heavily pregnant and due to fawn shortly.

Occasionally the deer can be seen at the Reserve when they come to the burn to drink or to the duck feeder for an easy snack. This deer was captured on camera by George Trudt on the 31st of March.

Both Wood Mice and Bank Voles have been seen from the windows of the Centre, although, as yet, some people are not sure of the difference between the two.

The stoat continues to put in the occasional appearance, patrolling the field boundary and hunting through the Reserve.

c. Amphibians:

The frogs and toads started to arrive at the pond to breed on March 17th. There were several hundred toads and rather fewer frogs. They tended to travel under cover of darkness – 57 toads were seen walking along the path into the reserve at 8.00 pm on March 21st. Having spawned, they had almost all returned to the woods by the 28th. The toads varied greatly in size and colour.



d. Ladybirds:



Visitors to the Reserve are asked to keep an eye out for the different species of ladybird, butterfly and moth and to enter details on the sightings board in the Centre.

Information about these insects is available in the Centre.

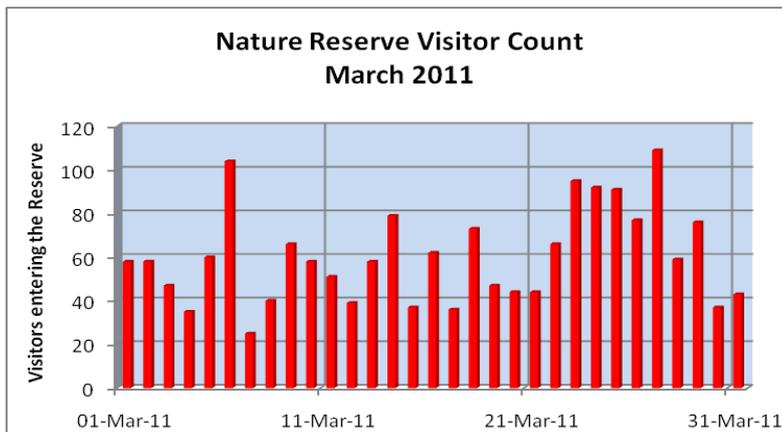
e. Plants:

Bluebells (or 'Wild Hyacinths') are normally found growing in wooded areas throughout the U.K. We are lucky enough to have a few patches of bluebells within the Reserve. In early spring the bluebell bulbs push up shiny narrow leaves through the leaf litter on the woodland floor. In this way they can make good use of all the available light to build up their food reserves, before the trees above them become covered with leaves and block out the sun. When the bluebells start flowering in April, many insects are just starting to become active and can take advantage of this abundant source of nectar.

Unfortunately, some well-meaning person has planted some hyacinth bulbs that are not native (possibly Spanish in origin) and these could hybridize with the native variety. The 'foreign' plants will be removed as soon as they can be distinguished from the real thing. Anyone wishing to contribute plants to the reserve should consult the Reserve Manager first.

3. Visitor Records:

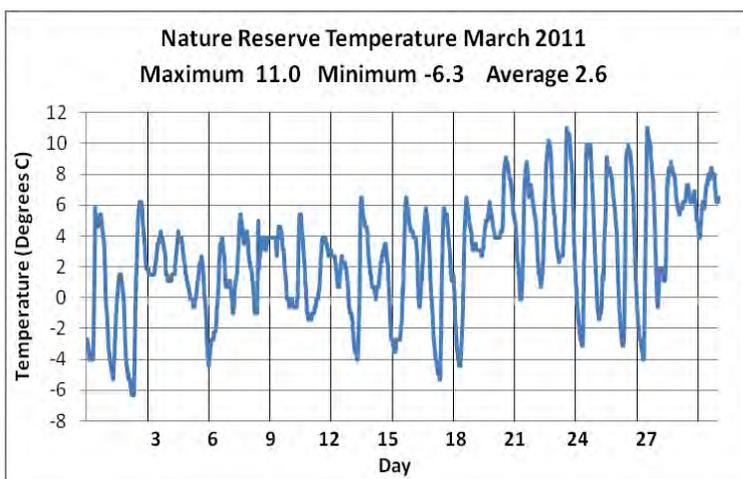
Month	Total number of Visitors	Daily Average Visitors
December	1251	40
January	1472	47
February	1603	57
March	1866	60



4. Weather Records:

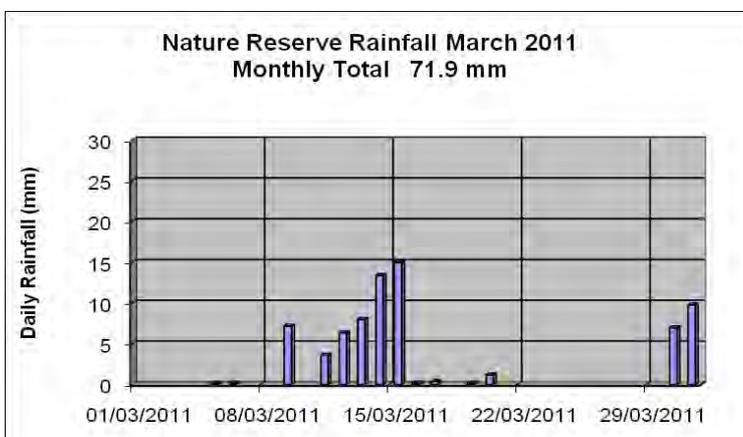
a. Air temperature

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



b. Precipitation

Month	Rainfall (mm)
November	57
December	29.7
January	108.8
February	189.6
March	71.9



5. Monitoring Red Squirrel Feeding Behaviour

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

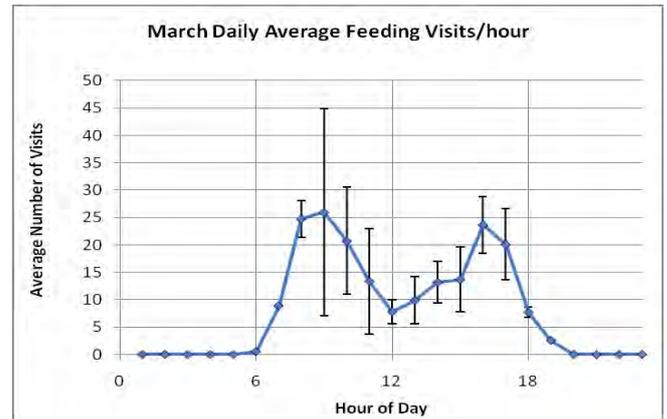
There are now two distinct peaks of feeding activity, compared to three in February. The first between 8.00 and 9.00am and the second between 4.00 and 5.00pm.

The squirrels are making use of the longer days by starting to feed earlier and finishing feeding later than in February.



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

There was a drop in the number of times the red squirrels come to the nut feeder, particularly during the morning peak feeding time. The average number of visits per hour fell from 38 to 26 at 9.00am. However, this was offset by the increased activity earlier in the morning.



6. Re-opening of Dryfesdale Lodge Visitors' Centre

The Visitors' Centre opened on the 26th of March and featured an exhibition by Lockerbie Wildlife Trust. Visitors are invited to the reserve to take part in the Eskrigg Challenge. Members of the Trust might consider taking up the challenge. Call in at the Visitors' Centre and find out more about it.



The exhibition has been well received and has helped to boost numbers visiting the Reserve.

7. What to look out for in April:

a. Spring flowers

Wood Sorrel, Bilberry, Dandelion, Marsh Marigold, Lady's Smock, Marsh Violet, Bluebells, Wood Avens, Daisy, Celandine.

b. Non-flowering plants

Water Horsetail, Adder's Tongue Fern, Scarlet Elf-cup, False Morel.

c. Butterflies

Peacock, Red Admiral, Orange Tip, Green-veined White, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell.

d. Moths

Hebrew Character, The Engrailed, Twin-spotted Quaker, Clouded Drab, Emperor.

e. Other things to note

Birds nesting, tadpoles swimming in pond, lizards basking in the heathland, tree leaves burgeoning, wolf spiders hunting, dew-covered webs in morning mist, the smell of wild garlic.