

Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

(www.lockerbie-wildlife-trust.co.uk)



Scottish Charity No:
SC 005538

Eskrigg Reserve

February 2015 News Bulletin

1. Views of the Reserve taken on (a) 5th and (b) 25th February.



(a) Cold morning with ice on pond



(b) Early morning sun through the trees

2. Confirmed wildlife sightings at the Reserve in February.

a. Birds

Blackbird, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Buzzard, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greylag Goose, Jay, Kestrel, Little Grebe, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Raven, Robin, Rook, Siskin, Snipe, Sparrowhawk, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Willow Tit, Woodcock, Woodpigeon, Wren.



b. Mammals

Bank Vole, Fox, Mole, Otter, Red Squirrel.



Fox spotted at Eskrigg but photograph taken elsewhere by Bob Little.



Otter photographed at Eskrigg on the 15th of February 2015 by Jim Rae



Bank vole picture taken on a previous visit to Eskrigg by Andrina Laidler.

Other photographs by Jim Rae

3. February Photo-gallery



Photographs of Canada Goose and Moorhen taken by Bob Glaister
Other photographs by Jim Rae

4. Volunteer Work

7th Feb. Angus Johnstone and Keir Stewart helped to fill in the potholes in the Eskrigg Farm road (forgot to take photograph).

10th Feb. Thomas Gibbs helped clear the burn and banks ready for the Nut Race.



14th Feb. Angus Johnstone and Keir Stewart helped to clean out the ditch along side the Reserve path. In addition to improving the drainage, this work cleans the site ready for the frogs and toads that will breed there in a few weeks time.



21st Feb. Michael Kerr, Keir Stewart, Patrick Malone and Rory Holden all helped to improve the woodland path. They dug out one section of soft, muddy turf, then laid terram membrane, covered it with gravel and rolled it. They then started to clear a second section of turf and tree roots. I finished clearing the roots in the afternoon.



22nd Feb. Maintenance Morning

On the Sunday morning, Neil Whitelaw helped me finish that section of path and complete another section, so that we now have a long stretch of uninterrupted gravel path..

5. Planned Activities

22nd Feb. Annual Nut Race

Twenty hardy souls braved the inclement weather in order to 'run' this year's Nut Race, including press photographer, Allan Devlin, who recorded the event for the Annandale Herald.



The sponsors of the winning nuts were:

1st Scott Glaister (£25), 2nd Elizabeth Thomson (£15) and 3rd Kyle McNeillie (£5).

Many thanks to all who sponsored the nuts and helped to raise just over £500. These funds will help towards the cost of feeding the birds and squirrels at the Reserve. A big thank you to Liz McDonnell who donated the cash prizes and cream eggs for all who took part.

6. Plant Galls at Eskrigg

In the June 2014 Bulletin I reported on a visit made to the Reserve by members of the British Plant Gall Society and gave six examples of the galls they found. I have now received a full report on the visit.

On the walk down the forest road to the Reserve they identified thirty-two different types of plant gall and within the Reserve they identified twenty-four types. Eleven types were common to both areas making it a total of forty-five different plant galls identified in and around Eskrigg Reserve. If anyone else is interested in the details of the host plants and the gall-inducing organisms, I will happily sent them a copy.

Photographs by Allan Devlin (AD) and Jim Rae (JR)

7. Welcoming Spring

Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*)

The Wood Anemone is a pale beauty of the woodlands. It is delicate, short-lived and one of the first wild flowers to let us know that spring is on the way. Its white flowers fade quickly and the leaves wither soon after.

Its scientific name comes from the Greek word *anemos*, meaning wind, hence its other name of “windflower”; in Gaelic it is Flur na Gaoithe.

For the botanically minded, it is a perennial herb with a slender brown rhizome and erect glabrous or sparsely hairy, thin, red stem. It has deeply lobed leaves that give off a musky aroma - giving it the name 'smell fox'. It doesn't actually have petals – the white perianth of the flower head is composed solely of white-coloured sepals (calyx), often with purple streaks. Hence the flowers produce no nectar. (Sepals are the name for those green parts that are usually underneath petals, protecting them before they open up.) The flowers are pollinated by bees, bumblebees and a large variety of flies, particularly hoverflies.



Frogs and Toads

For many years the amphibians arrived at the Reserve to breed on, or about, the 17th of March. In 2012, they came a week early and in 2013 they didn't arrive until the 12th of April because of the long, cold spring. In 2014, they appeared from their winter hibernation at the usual time. What will happen this year? The heron has already started to patrol the edge of the pond in anticipation of a tasty breakfast.



Forest Operations and the Ravens



In the autumn of 2014, Castle Milk Estate felled the mature stand of pine to the south of the Reserve as part of the normal forest operations. This totally changed the skyline and removed the nesting sites of several Ravens. It will be interesting to see if, this year, they move to other trees nearby or take up residence in a different area altogether.



Red Squirrels

There have been good numbers of Red Squirrels visiting the feeding stations at the Reserve recently, including a few suckling females. Keep an eye out for young squirrels over the next month or two.

Note: Some of the Eskrigg Squirrels have been featuring in the RSPB's 'Vote for Bob' campaign. This week Bob is in the Midlands. You can visit 'Bob's World' on the RSPB website.

Photographs by Jim Rae

For more information call Jim Rae or visit our website.

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