

Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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



Scottish Charity No:
SC 005538

Eskrigg Reserve

January 2012 News Bulletin

1. View of the pond taken on the 30th of January. Duck leaving pond to cross the ice for food (31st).



2. Confirmed wildlife sightings:

a. Birds:

Blackbird, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Collared Dove, Dunnock, Fieldfare, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Jay, Kestrel, Little Grebe, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Raven, Robin, Siskin, Sparrowhawk, Tawny Owl, Teal, Tree Creeper, Willow Tit, Wood Pigeon, Wren.

b. Mammals:

Bank Vole, Mole, Red Squirrel, Stoat, Weasel, Wood Mouse.

c. Fungi:

The Jelly Hedgehog or Jelly Tongue fungus (*Pseudohydnum gelatinosum*), shown opposite, was found growing on an old Sitka Spruce stump.



3. Animal, vegetable or mineral?

The strange growth on the dead branch shown opposite intrigued many a walker at Eskrigg. The white, beard-like structure looked at first to be some sort of exotic fungus or lichen. However, when a small piece was placed in the hand, it melted and left but a small drop of water. The growth was in fact made of ice crystals that gradually got longer and longer as the cold weather continued and more and more water exuded from the dead branch. Why only some dead branches exhibited this phenomenon and not others remains a mystery?



4. Bluebells

Latin name: *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*

Size: Grows to a height of around 40cms.

Distribution: Found throughout the UK.

Flowering months: April to June.

Habitat: Found mainly in woodlands, especially coppiced woods.



Bluebell Wood by Wendy Braban

Special features: Sometimes called 'Wild Hyacinths', bluebells are found growing in wooded areas throughout the U.K. Our unique Atlantic coast climate allows the bluebells to grow in such profusion they literally carpet whole woodland floors. Nowhere else in the world do they grow in such abundance.

Bluebells flower early in the year, between April and June. In this way they can make good use of all the available light, before the trees above them become covered with leaves, and block out the sun. When the bluebells start flowering, many butterflies are just starting to become active after their winter hibernation and can take advantage of their nectar.

Blue Glue:

Bluebells are part of our history, in fact they've had a part in shaping our history. In the Middle Ages fletchers used the sticky sap inside bluebell bulbs as a glue to bond the feathers on the arrows. Many a famous battle has been won with the help of bluebells!

The Battle of the Bulbs:

These days, bluebells are fighting another battle. This time it's against a Spanish invader. A few years ago gardeners started planting imported Spanish bluebell bulbs, and now these Spanish flowers are taking over. The Spanish variety will grow almost anywhere, and many of them have got into the countryside by fair means or foul. The two species are interbreeding and producing hybrid plants.



The Spanish variety has blue bell-shaped flowers, but that's where the similarity ends. Our native bluebells, shown opposite, have a delicate scent, while the Spanish variety has hardly any. Our native bluebells have rich blue coloured blooms on just one side of a blue stem, while the Spanish bluebell is larger and straighter with pale coloured flowers on all sides.

Conservationists are working to stop the spread of the Spanish variety in Britain and help save our own native bluebells from extinction.

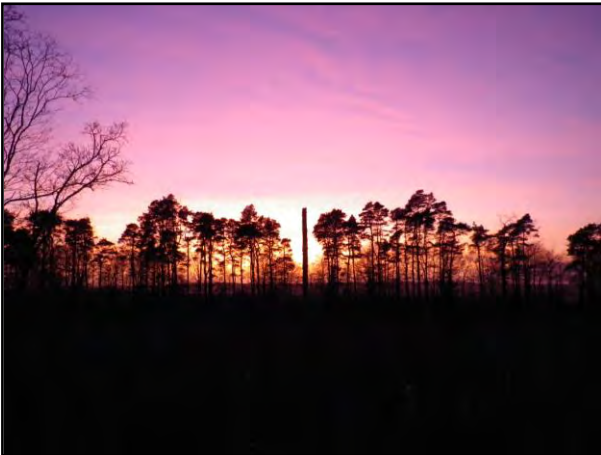
We plan to do the same at Eskrigg Nature Reserve. With the approval of Scottish Natural Heritage, we will remove and destroy the non-native plants and replace them with Scottish Bluebells from an accredited local source. The Reserve Manager would like volunteers to assist with this work, hence the reason for putting the article on Bluebells in this month's bulletin. If you would like to help, get in touch with Jim, his contact details are at the end of the bulletin.

5. Activities at the Reserve during January:

Overnight on the 2nd/3rd strong winds blew down a number of trees, including some next to the Reserve. These were cut back clear of the path the next morning.



On the 12th and 18th there were beautiful sunsets:



On the 19th a fallen willow which blocking the corner path was cut up and cleared and the stream below the Reserve was also cleared of fallen branches and accumulated debris. On the same day Dumfries and Galloway Countryside Rangers, Ross Gemmell and Gilbert Clark, replaced the rotten, wooden gates across the Annandale Way beyond Eskrigg Farm with longer-lasting galvanized metal gates.



On the 21st volunteers Innes Green and Lewis Carruthers helped to clear the sodden tuft and cut back tree roots from part of the path behind the shelter.



On the 23rd S1 Environmental Studies students, Isaac Hann and Connor Jardine continued the path-work by helping to dig out more of the wet turf, lay down membrane and cover the surface with a layer of gravel.



On the 24th Ian Dunn helped to complete another section of path before moving to the Dalton Road entrance to assist with the clearing of illegally dumped rubbish. Nine bags of rubbish were taken to the landfill site near Annan.



On the 25th Lockerbie Academy's S2 Environmental Studies group, (L to R) Ross Thorburn, Thomas Gibbs, Prentice Irving, Christina Spence and Jamie McCormick, carried out a similar clean-up at the start of the woodland path from the lay-by near the Dryfesdale Cemetery.



Another two car-loads of rubbish were taken to the landfill site.

Despite the warning about possible fines, some 'Dumb Dumper' left his or her old washing machine at the same site. A job for another day, perhaps?

On the 27th the S3 Environmental Studies group from Lockerbie Academy, Teri Fraser, Pamela Beeton and Danny Brannan, practiced some old, and learned some new, skills when working together to convert a black, plastic cover from a factory ventilation shaft into a large bird box.



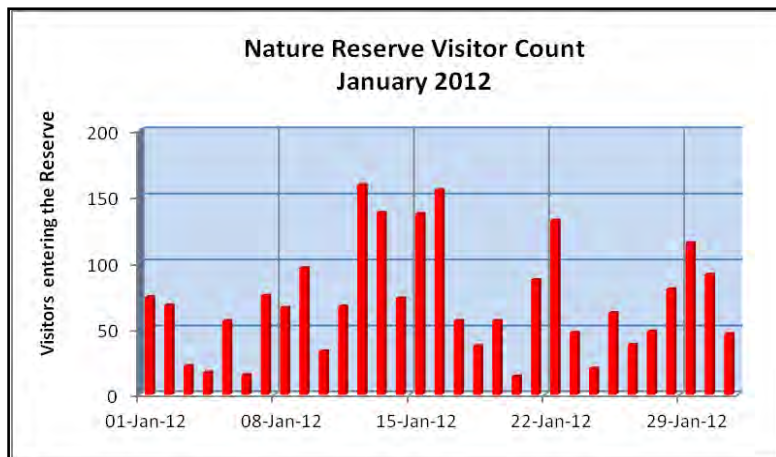
On the 29th, the Maintenance Day, (L to R) David Hughes, Rosie Miller and Karen Miller worked with the Reserve Manager to complete another section of gravel path behind the shelter in the morning and to renew a long stretch of edging along the main path through the Reserve.

Volunteers are always welcome. If you think you can help then please contact Jim at the number given on page 2.



6. Visitor Records:

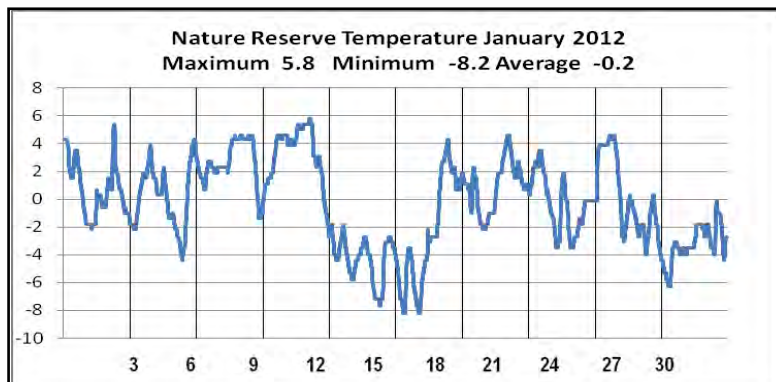
Month	Total number of Visitors	Daily Average Visitors
August	1661	54
September	1515	51
October	1763	57
November	1432	48
December	1373	44
January	2180	70



7. Weather Records:

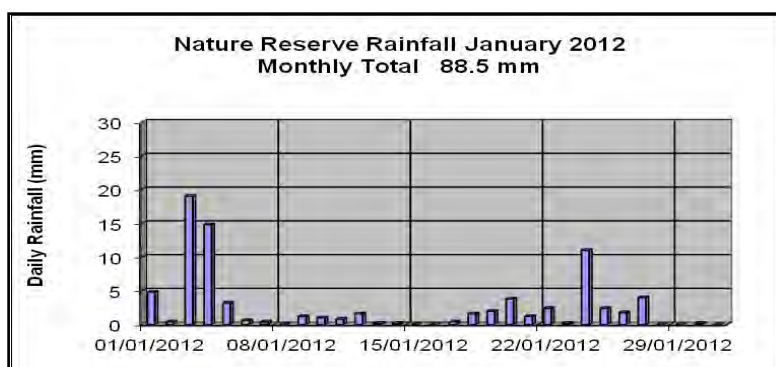
a. Air temperature

Month	Maximum	Minimum	Average
August	16.3	4.6	12.1
September	20.2	3.9	12.1
October	17.0	-1.8	9.2
November	12.4	-3.5	6.6
December	14.1	-3.5	2.89
January	5.8	-8.2	-0.24

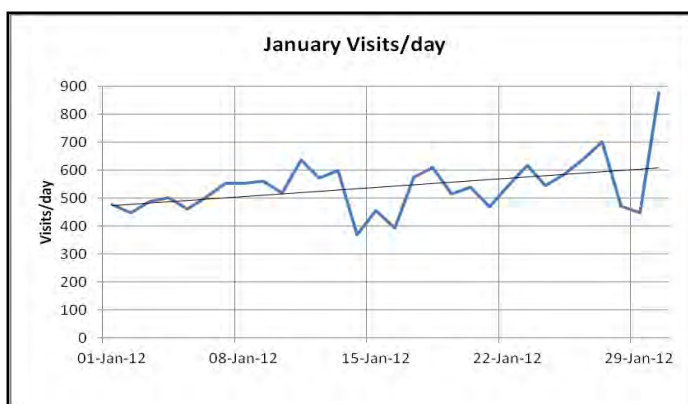
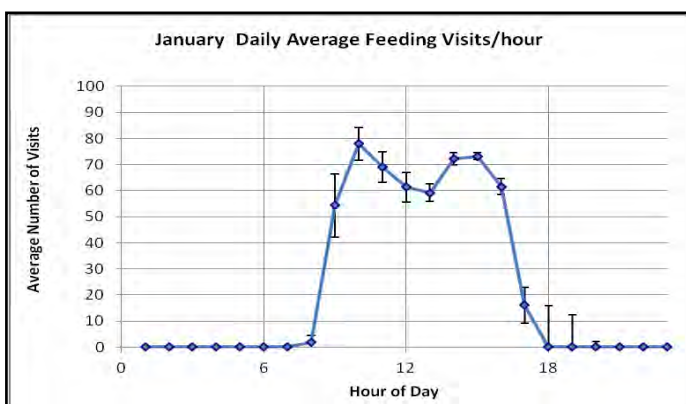


b. Precipitation

Month	Rainfall (mm)
August	127.6
September	151.6
October	167.6
November	96.8
December	148.8
January	88.5



8. Monitoring Red Squirrel Feeding Behaviour



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