

Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

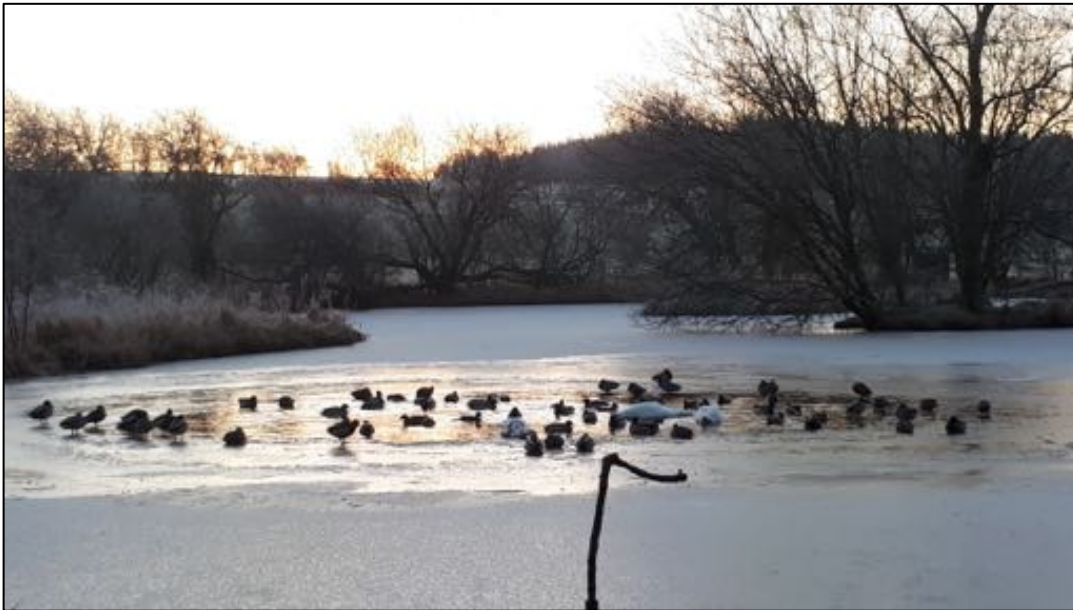


Scottish Charity No:
SC 005538

Eskrigg Reserve

January 2019 News Bulletin

1. Eskrigg pond in the late afternoon on the 31st of January.



2. Confirmed wildlife sightings at the Reserve during January.

a. Birds

Blackbird, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Brambling, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Collared Dove, Dunnock, Fieldfare, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Goshawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Wagtail, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Jay, Kestrel, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Raven, Robin, Rook, Siskin, Snipe, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Stock Dove, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Wood Pigeon, Wren.

b. Mammals

Badger, Bank Vole, Fox, Mole, Red Squirrel, Roe Deer, Woodmouse.



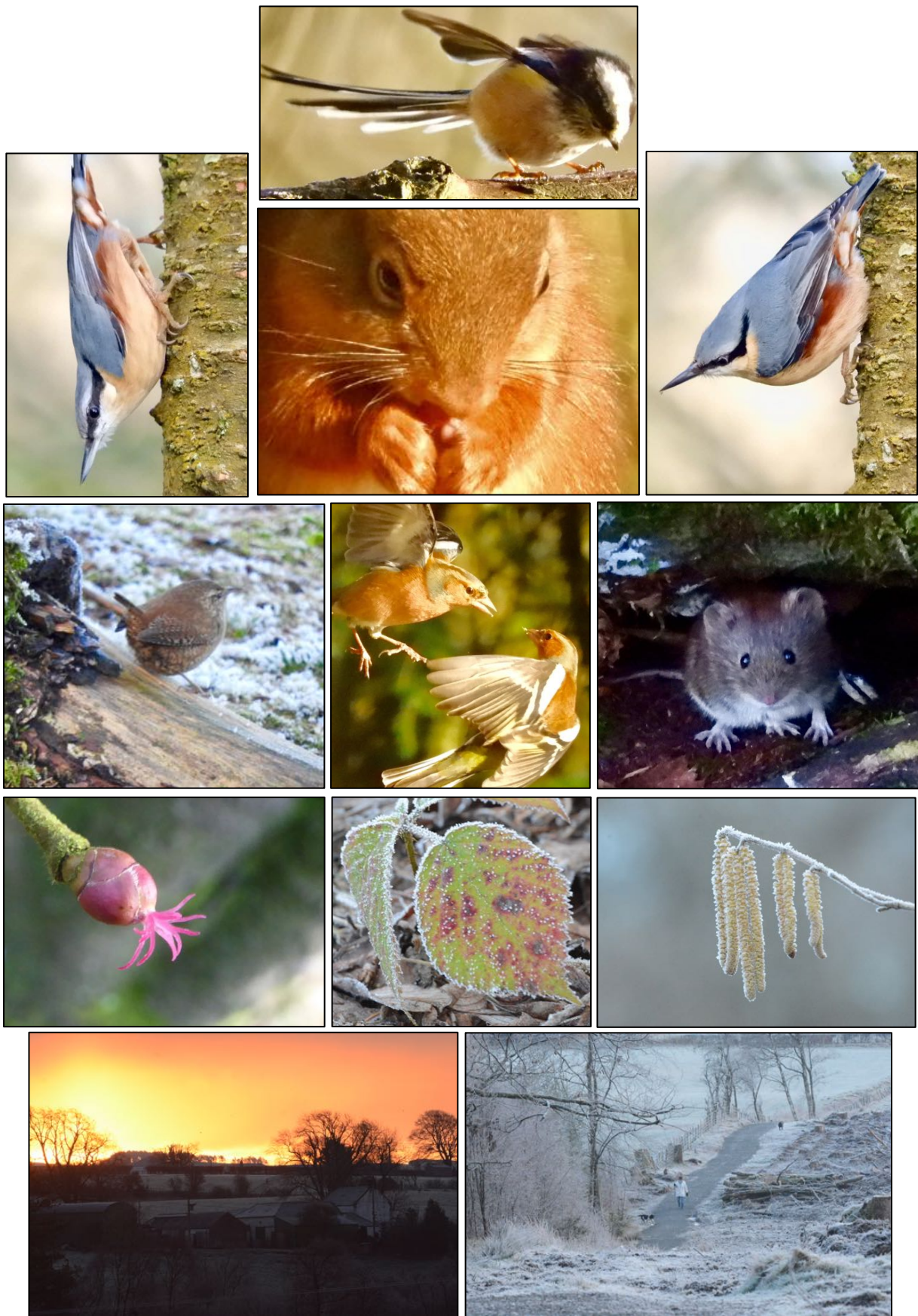
Hair Ice



Roe Deer grazing at the side of the forest road just before sunrise on the 31st of January

Photographs by Jim Rae

3. Eskrigg Reserve with Gary Shanks and Jim Rae



1st Row: Long-tailed Tit (GS)

2nd Row: Nuthatch (GS), Red Squirrel (GS), Nuthatch (GS)

3rd Row: Wren (GS), Chaffinches (GS), Bank Vole (GS)

4th Row: Female Hazel Flower (JR), Frosted Bramble Leaves (JR), Male Hazel Flower/Catkin (JR)

5th Row: Sunrise behind Eskrigg Farm (JR), A frosty start to the day round the Northern Loop (JR)

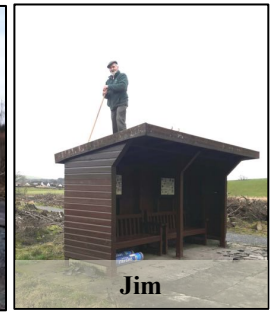
4. Volunteer Activities in January

Sat. 12th Anthony Ison and Lewis Carrick helped **Jim** rake up leaves along the Honeysuckle Walk.

Tue. 15th Steven Jackson helped **Jim** strip the old felt from the roof of the shelter in the morning and then Jim attached the new roofing felt in the afternoon.



Steven



Jim



L to R: Lewis, Neil and Anthony

Sat. 19th Anthony Ison, Lewis Carrick and Neil Stewart helped **Jim** with a range of tasks in the morning. They tore up and bagged the old roofing felt, filled in the pot holes on the Eskrigg Farm road and part of the forest road with 40mm gravel and then resurfaced part of the Reserve path with 10mm gravel.

Sat. 19th In the afternoon, Jim emptied the Dog Bins as he normally does once a week. It is quite common for him to have to pick up over a dozen patches of dog litter from the path between the car park and the Reserve - not a pleasant task and a poor reflection on certain dog owners. Most regular dog walkers are generally good at keeping their dogs under control and cleaning up after them. On this day he cleared the dog litter from some of the new paths as well and was appalled when he realized that he had filled thirty-three (33) doggy bags with dog litter. There are obviously a significant number of irresponsible dog owners out there.



33 bags of dog poo - disgusting



Sun. 20th Jim replaced the four old Red Squirrel feeders with new ones, kindly constructed by Alastair Gordon to Jim's design. It was only a matter of minutes before they were being used for the first time.

Many thanks Alastair.

Tue. 22nd After filling in some of the pot holes on the forest road, Steven helped Jim move a bench seat, donated by Karen Gass, to its sunny position on the Northern Loop. Steven was quick to spot the cluster of 7-spot Ladybirds on a nearby conifer.



Steven hard at work



Time to relax

Sat. 26th Anthony and Neil helped **Jim** clear the banks of the feeder burn of overhanging branches and dead timber, including one thick tree trunk. The banks will have to be strimmed prior to the Nut Race on the 24th of February. If possible, the finishing line will be built up level before then as well.

Photographs by Jim Rae

5. Some Modern Forestry Practices

Kerb

Anyone who has visited the Reserve recently will have noticed the warning signs at either end of the Northern Loop - the new gravel path round the area where the Scots Pine and some Sitka Spruce trees were harvested at the start of 2018. These are signs that are put up by Castle Milk Estate wherever spraying has been carried out in order to safeguard the public and their pets.



The signs read 'Warning Pesticides'. In actual fact, the chemical is not a pesticide but a herbicide called **Kerb Flo**. It has been sprayed during the winter on the mounds of soil where the next crop of trees will be planted in order to prevent the germination of grass seeds. It will also help to control well-established deep-rooted perennial grasses such as couch grass. The active ingredient in Kerb Flo is **propyzamide**. When the young tree seedlings are planted they will have little or no competition for the light and soil nutrients and a better chance of flourishing. Kerb Flo will also be applied at the start of the next season. Thereafter, the area around the young trees will not need to be sprayed with Roundup (glyphosate) as has happened in the past, nor will competing grasses need to be cut by hand. The trees being planted in this area this spring will be Douglas Fir and some Norway Spruce - both squirrel-friendly species.

Spruce Bark Beetle

The Sitka Spruce trees that were felled last spring had been attacked by the Spruce Bark Beetle and were either dead or dying - see the report on the Great Spruce Bark Beetle in the February 2018 Bulletin. Rather than replant some areas with the usual Sitka Spruce this year, the Estate will be planting an improved strain of Norway Spruce. The stock plants, from which the seedlings will come, were cultivated in an orchard containing the finest specimens selected from a wide area across Sweden. It is hoped that these young trees will be hardier and more resistant to attack by bark beetles.

Drought crack

In some parts of Castle Milk Estate, **drought crack** can be a problem. This happens particularly in some hilly areas. Here the soils may be reasonably fertile and encourage good growth in the young trees, but they are too shallow for normal root development. Therefore, when the trees reach a certain age, the root system is incapable of absorbing enough water to meet the needs of the tree. During periods of water shortage this can lead to partial death of the root system.



Cracked Pine tree

Drought crack results from the internal shrinkage or collapse of the wood owing to water being withdrawn from the main stem during periods of drought. It is generally first seen in trees that are about 20 years old. A zone of abnormal wood begins to appear in the main stem. The affected trees are distinguished by the low specific gravity of the wood produced and the marked absence of well-thickened latewood. This ultimately reduces the quality and quantity of the timber in the final harvest.

Younger trees affected by drought tend to die back without the cracking of the main stem.

This year the estate will be planting an improved strain of Sitka Spruce which will hopefully be more resistant to drought crack and better able to cope with climate change. Sitka Spruce is not the only conifer to be affected by drought crack.

Picea lutzii

Picea lutzii is a natural hybrid between Sitka Spruce and White Spruce, which will hopefully show hybrid vigour and summer drought resistance. This tree would suit some of the drier sites around the Estate, like parts of Whitcastles - if we get the global warming that has been predicted in the next 20 years.



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