

Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

Eskrigg Reserve

March 2020 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:
SC 005538

1. View of the pond on the 17th of March.



The day the frogs and toads arrived at the pond to breed (JR).

2. Confirmed wildlife sightings at the Reserve during March.

a. Birds

Blackbird, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Collared Dove, Curlew, Dunnock, Fieldfare, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Goshawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose, Grey Wagtail, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Jay, Kestrel, Linnet, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Mallard, Mandarin, Meadow Pipit, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Nuthatch, Oystercatcher, Pheasant, Pink-footed Goose, Pintail, Raven, Reed Bunting, Robin, Rook, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Stock Dove, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow, Wood Pigeon, Wren.

b. Mammals

Bank Vole, Brown Hare, Fox, Mole, Rabbit, Red Squirrel, Roe Deer, Weasel, Woodmouse.

c. Amphibians and Reptiles

Frog, Smooth Newt, Toad.

d. Insects

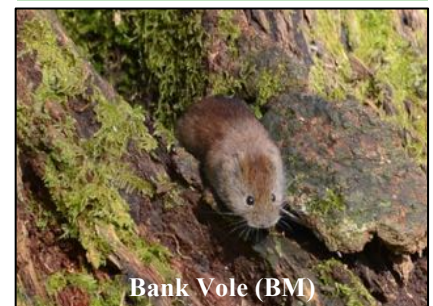
Peacock butterfly, Ruby Tiger caterpillar.



House Sparrow & Tree Sparrow (DB)



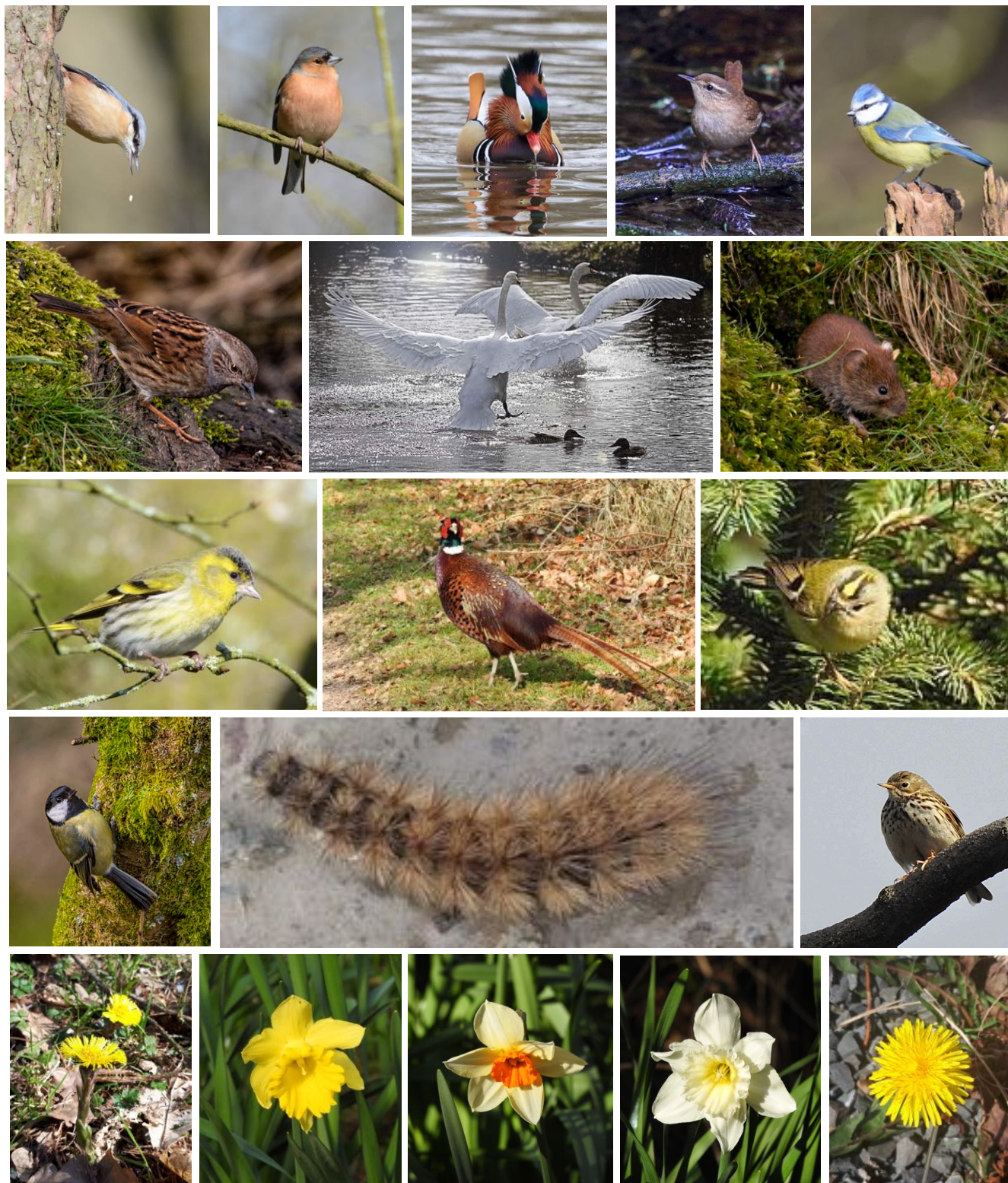
Goldcrest taking a bath (GS)



Bank Vole (BM)

Photographs by Jim Rae (JR), David Brantom (DB),
Gary Shanks (GS), Brian Murphy (BM)

3. Eskrigg Reserve - March Photo-gallery



1st Row (BM): Nuthatch, Chaffinch, Mandarin, Wren, Blue Tit
 2nd Row: Dunnock (R&FB), Mute Swans (IR), Bank Vole (R&FB)
 3rd Row: Siskin (BM), Pheasant (JR), Goldcrest (JR)
 4th Row: Great Tit (R&FB), Ruby Tiger caterpillar (GT), Meadow Pipit (GS)
 5th Row (JR): Coltsfoot, three assorted Daffodils, Dandelion

Photographs by: Robert & Frances Blaikie (R&FB), Brian Murphy (BM), Jim Rae (JR),
 Ian Roberts (IR), Gary Shanks (GS), George Trudt (GT)

4. March Volunteer Activities at Eskrigg Reserve

Sun. 1st Ewan Armstrong, James Cotton, James Vatcher, Finlay Lennox and Dominic Holden (Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteers) helped Jim Rae transport three loads of gravel to the new path that is replacing the boardwalk.



Tue. 3rd Steven Dalgliesh worked on the new timber edging for the path while Jim Rae cleared mud and brought in loads of gabion stones and gravel.

Fri 6th Jim added a load of gabion stones and two loads of 40mm gravel to the path.



Sun. 8th The DofE team, Alasdair Thomson, Finlay Lennox, James Vatcher, Dominic Holden, Ewan Armstrong, James Cotton and Anthony Ison, helped Jim complete another section of the new path.

This was to be the last group workshop for the time being due to the Covid-19 virus pandemic.



Tue. 10th Steven Dalgliesh and Jim Rae, **working apart**, carried on with the new path and reached the corner with the layer of gabion stones.



Mon. 16th Jim started to dig out the mud, 0.5m deep in parts, along the final leg of the path.

Tue. 17th Steven Dalgliesh added to the timber edging while Jim dug out more of the mud.

Wed. 18th Jim finished digging out the mud on the final leg of the path.

Thu. 19th and **Fri. 20th** Jim reached the corner of the path with the layer of 40mm gravel.

Sat. 21st Steven Dalgliesh helped Jim bring in several loads of gabion stones and they nearly completed the last stretch.

Sun. 22nd Jim completed the layer of gabion stones and added to the layers of 40mm gravel and 10mm sub-base.

Mon. 23rd Jim almost completed the layer of 40mm gravel and reached the corner with the 10mm sub-base.

Tue. 24th In the morning, Jim finished laying the 40mm gravel. In the afternoon, Steven completed the timber edging while Jim almost completed the top layer of 10mm sub-base.



Wed. 25th Jim completed the final leg of the path to replace the boardwalk.

Work to put a timber edging along the first section of the path will be done later in the year.

5. March Events at Eskrigg Reserve



Tue. 10th A group of **primary 7** pupils and their teachers, from **Germany** and **Turkey**, were given a guided tour of the Reserve and Woodland Walks.



Tue. 24th The **Eskrigg Centre** was closed to the public for Health and Safety reasons relating to the Covid-19 virus.

6. Wetland Visitors - 7. Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*)

Despite its warts and ancient associations with witches, the common toad is a gardener's friend, feeding mainly on slugs and snails, but also on insect larvae and worms.

Lifespan: Up to 10 -12 years (in the wild - av. 4 years).

The common toad has olive-brown, warty skin, copper eyes and short back legs. It walks rather than hops, and lays its spawn in long strings around aquatic plants, with two rows of eggs per string. These amphibians breed in ponds during the spring and spend much of the rest of the year feeding in woodland, gardens, hedgerows and tussocky grassland. They are famous for their mass migrations back to their breeding ponds often around St Valentine's Day.

Since 1986, they have started to arrive at Eskrigg pond on the 17th of March in all but three years - one year, after a very cold spring, they arrived a month later; whilst on two very mild springs they arrived a fortnight earlier.

The breeding toads provide a major source of food for the grey heron - sometimes, as many as three herons can be seen feeding around the Eskrigg pond at the same time.

Over the next three months, the resulting abundance of tadpoles, along with those of frogs and newts, also provide a feeding bonanza for the larvae and adults of predatory water beetles along with several species of water bugs and the nymphs of larger dragonfly species.

In recent months at Eskrigg Reserve, a hard-core path has been constructed to replace the boardwalk. The breeding toads approaching from the south each day found the path to be a barrier and many were lifted over it onto the bank of the pond each day. Between the 17th and the 29th of March, 941 toads were transferred. Amphibian ramps will be put in place before next year's migration. The routes for the toads coming from other directions were unaffected.



The Puddock

John M. Caie

A puddock sat by the lochan's brim,
An' he thocht there was never a puddock like him.
He sat on his hurdies, he waggled his legs,
An' cockit his heid as he glowered throu' the seggs.
The bigsy wee cratur' was feelin' that prood,
He gapit his mou' an' he croakit oot lood:
"Gin ye'd a' like tae see a richt puddock," quo' he,
"Ye'll never, I'll sweer, get a better nor me.
I've fem'lies an' wives an' a weel-plenished hame,
Wi' drink for my thrapple an' meat for my wame.
The lasses aye thocht me a fine strappin' chiel,
An' I ken I'm a rale bonny singer as weel.
I'm nae gaun tae blaw, but th' truth I maun tell-
I believe I'm the verra MacPuddock himsel'." ...

A heron was hungry an' needin' tae sup,
Sae he nabbit th' puddock and gollup't him up;
Syne runkled his feathers: "A peer thing," quo' he,
"But - puddocks is nae fat they eesed tae be."

Photographs by Jim Rae

Jim Rae (Eskrigg Reserve Manager)

Address: Carradale, 12 Douglas Terrace, Lockerbie, Dumfries and Galloway, DG11 2DZ.

Home Tel.: 01576 203 314 / Mobile No.: 07739 987 009

Email: jim.rae2012@gmail.com