

# Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

## Eskrigg Reserve

### June 2022 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:  
SC 005538

#### 1. Reserve pond on 20 June.



#### 2. Confirmed wildlife sightings at the Reserve during June.

##### a. Birds:

Blackbird, Blackcap, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Greylag Goose, House Martin, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Jay, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Raven, Red Kite, Reed Bunting, Robin, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Stock Dove, Stonechat, Swallow, Treecreeper, Tree Pipit, Tree Sparrow, Willow Warbler, Woodpigeon, Wood Warbler, Wren.

**b. Mammals:** Bank Vole, Fox, Hare, Mole, Rabbit, Red Squirrel, Roe Deer & fawn, Woodmouse.

**c. Reptiles:** Common Lizard.

**d. Butterflies:** Green-veined White, Large White, Meadow Brown, Red Admiral, Ringlet, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Skipper.

**Moths:** Chimney Sweeper, Green Carpet (a), Spruce Carpet.

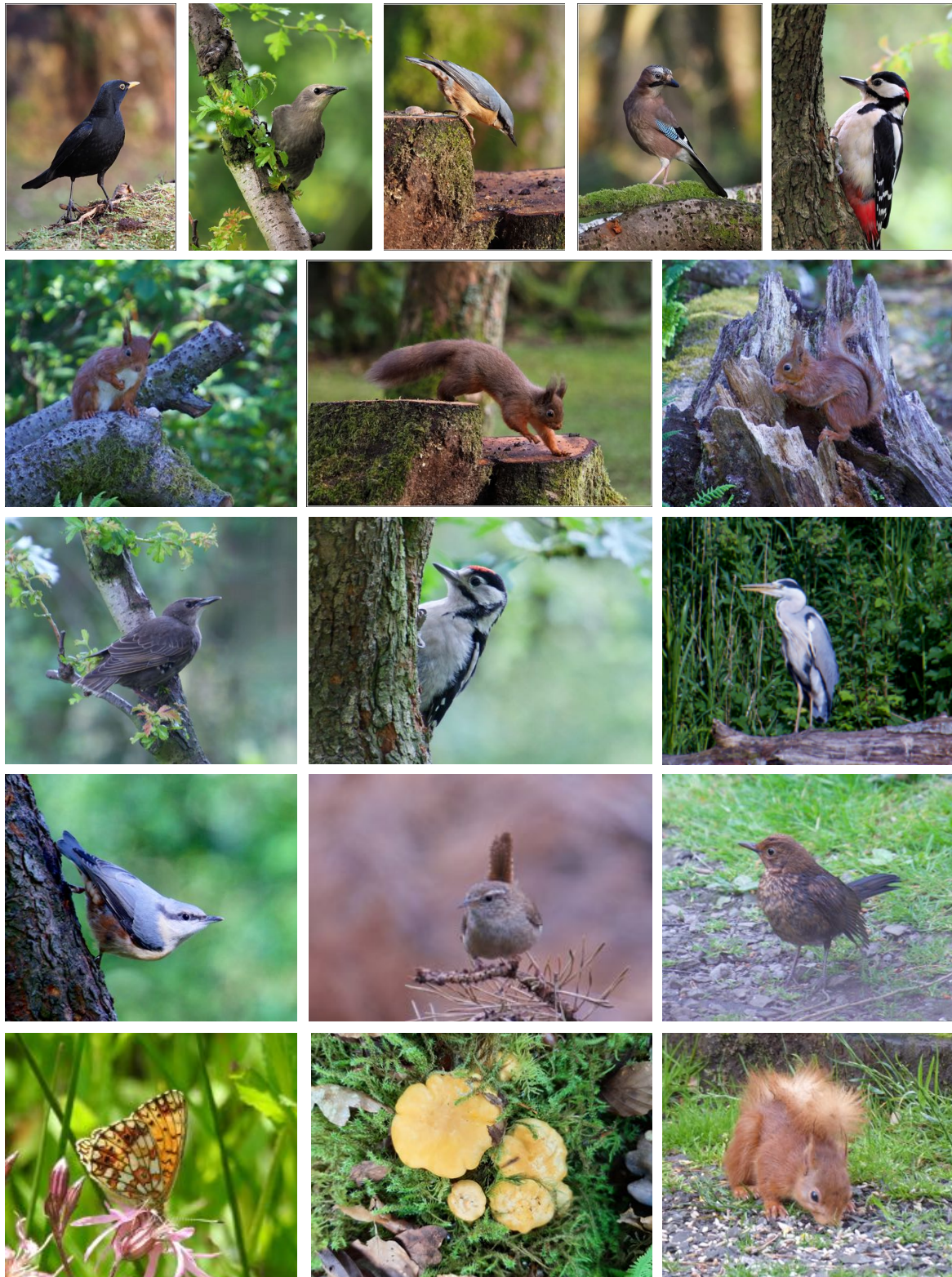
**Other insects:** Buff-tailed Bumblebee (c), Grasshopper, Myrid Bug (b).



Photographs by Jim Rae



3. June 2022 Photo-gallery.



**Row 1 (SR): Blackbird, Young Starling, Nuthatch, Jay, Great Spotted Woodpecker (male)**

**Row 2: Red Squirrel (SS), Red Squirrel (SR), Red Squirrel (SS)**

**Row 3 (SS): Young Starling, Great Spotted Woodpecker (juvenile), Grey Heron**

**Row 4 (SS): Nuthatch, Wren, Young Blackbird**

**Row 5: Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (CT), Chanterelle (JR), Red Squirrel (JR)**

**Photographs by Jim Rae (JR), Sandy Robertson (SR), Sybille Spägle (SS), Caroline Thom (CT)**



#### 4. June Events.

##### Thu. 2 Cornet's Lass Ride-out

During this Annual Event, a large number of people of all ages rode their horses and ponies down the forest road next to the Reserve. Many cyclists, following the ride-out, cut through the Reserve and followed the horses down the forest road.

Wed. 16 **Jim Rae** (as Reserve Manager) attended **Castle Milk's Forest Plan Scoping Consultation** at St. Mungo Hall, Kettleholm.

#### 5. June Visits.

##### Mon. 13 Visit by Mount Cameron Primary School

The planned visit to Eskrigg Reserve could not go ahead because of the forestry work in the area. Instead, Jim took the group of 28 children and 3 staff to Lochmaben and gave them a guided tour of the Castle Loch Walk and Lochmaben Castle.



#### 6. Maintenance and construction work at the Reserve and Woodland Walks in June.



Sybille & Tom

Tue. 7 **Sybille Spägele** helped **Jim** strim and rake the Reserve Car Park and the top section of the path from the Car Park down towards the Reserve.

Fri. 10 **Tom Hargreaves** and **Sybille Spägele** helped **Jim** strim, prune and rake the edges of the path down to the shelter. (Photo)

Mon. 13 **Sybille Spägele** finished pruning the trees along the path behind the shelter.

Mon. 20 **Tom Hargreaves** helped **Jim** concrete in the posts for the replacement jetty.

Tue. 21 **Jim** met with **Scott McLean (Joiner)** to discuss some repairs to the Eskrigg Centre and Red Squirrel Hide.

Wed. 22 **Jim** met with **Gordon Reid** to discuss the possibility of Gordon doing some voluntary work at the Reserve. **Jim** then worked on rebuilding the jetty.

Fri. 24 **Gordon Reid** helped **Jim** to strim and rake the sides of the path to the **Kingfisher Hide**. (photo)



Gordon Reid



Thu. 23 & Sat, 25 **Jim** continued to rebuild the jetty.

Sun. 26 **Jim** tidied up around the Centre and cleared the cut grass from the path behind the Shelter.

Mon. 27 **Jim** strimmed the grass at the Cemetery entrance and along the path beside the Dumfries Road. **Ross Gemmell** cut the sides of the path round the northern loop (part of the Annandale Way).

Tue. 28, Wed. 29 & Thu. 30 **Jim** weeded the sides of the path through the Reserve.



Photographs by Jim Rae

**7. June Flowers.**

Barren Strawberry, Bramble, Bilberry, Bird Cherry, Bird’s-foot Trefoil, Broad-leaved Dock, Broad-leaved Willowherb, **Buck’s-beard**, Bugle, Bush Vetch, Chickweed, Cleavers, **Climbing Corydalis**, Common Sorrel, Common Valerian, Common Wintergreen, Cow Parsley, Creeping Buttercup, Crosswort, Cuckooflower, Cut-leaved Crane’s-bill, Daisy, Dandelion, Dog Rose, Dog Violet, Elder, Enchanter’s Nightshade, **Field Rose**, Forget-me-not, Foxglove, Gean, Germander Speedwell, Greater Plantain, **Ground Elder**, Hairy Willowherb, Hawkweed, Hawthorn, Heath Bedstraw, Heath Speedwell, Heath Spotted Orchid, Hedge Woundwort, Herb Robert, Holly, Honeysuckle, **Lady’s Bedstraw**, Lesser Stitchwort, Lily-of-the-Valley, Marsh Thistle, Meadowsweet, Meadow Buttercup, Meadow Crane’s-bill, Meadow Vetchling, Nettle, Nipplewort, Oxeye Daisy, Pignut, Pink Purslane, Prickly Sow Thistle, Ragged Robin, Red Champion, Red Clover, Ribwort Plantain, Rosebay Willowherb, Rough Hawkbit, Round-leaved Crowfoot, Russian Comfrey, Slender St. John’s-wort, Star of Bethlehem, Sticky Mouse-ear, Strawberry Clover, Tormentil, Tufted Vetch, Tutsan, Welsh Poppy, **Yellow Rattle**.



Lady's Bedstraw



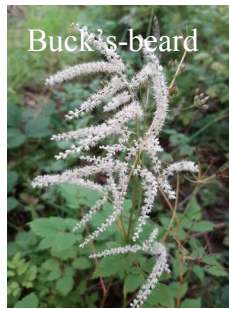
Climbing Corydalis



Yellow Rattle



Ground Elder



Buck's-beard



Field Rose

**Note 1:** Jim found the **Climbing Corydalis** (*Corydalis claviculata*) for the very first time at the Reserve in June, and it was flowering at the time.

**Note 2:** Jim found a **Buck’s-beard** (*Aruncus dioicus*) flower for the first time at the Reserve at the end of June.

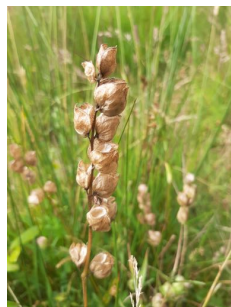
**Note 3: Development of the Yellow Rattle** (*Rhinanthus minor*)



Flower



Ripening calyxes



Seeds in 'rattle'

When the flowers of Yellow Rattle fade, the brown calyxes (containing the sepals) in which the tiny seeds ripen can be seen and heard - they give a distinctive 'rattle', hence the common name. Yellow Rattle is an annual that thrives in grasslands, living a semi-parasitic life by feeding off the nutrients in the roots of nearby grasses. For this reason, it was once seen as an indicator of poor grassland by farmers, but is now often used to turn improved grassland back to meadow - by feeding off the

vigorous grasses, it eventually allows more delicate, traditional species to push their way through. (Text from “The Wildlife Trusts”)

Photographs by Jim Rae



## 8. Plant of the Month – Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

Common Holly is an evergreen shrub or tree that can grow to 10-15m or more in height and live for 300 years. The bark is smooth, thin, silvery-grey, becoming warty with age. The young twigs are usually bright green, slightly downy, becoming smooth and shiny. The leaves are 5-12cm long, up to 3 times as long as wide, ovate to oblong-elliptic, usually spiny-tipped.

Often the lower leaves are very spiny, while upper leaves are more ovate and have fewer spikes. This development is related to protecting leaves within reach of browsing animals. They are smooth, dark glossy green above and matt, dull green beneath. They are waxy to touch, like other evergreen trees. The petiole is about 1cm long, stout and grooved above.

The flowers are fragrant, 6-8mm long. Holly is **dioecious**, meaning that male and female flowers occur on different trees. Both the males and females produce red buds, which develop small white flowers in May. The flowers have four petals. The male flowers have large anthers



and an abortive ovary; the female flowers have a large ovary and small anthers. The fruit develop in July, but remain hard and green until the next summer when it is 0.7-1cm long, globose and scarlet. The pedicel is 4-8mm long. Holly trees are pollinated by insects, and the seed is spread by birds through whose gut they must pass before germination. This is why little hollies mysteriously appear in gardens when there is no tree near!

### Value to wildlife

Holly provides dense cover and good nesting opportunities for birds, while its deep, dry, leaf litter may be used by Hedgehogs and small mammals for hibernation. The berries are a vital source of food for birds in winter, and small mammals, such as Wood Mice and Dormice. The Mistle Thrush is known for vigorously guarding the berries of holly in winter to prevent other birds from eating them. In winter thrushes such as Blackbirds, Redwing and Fieldfare gorge themselves on holly berries and spread the seed. Many birds will nest in holly as its spiky leaves protect them from predators, or roost in it in winter. The flowers provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The leaves are eaten by a variety of caterpillars.

### Mythology and symbolism

Holly branches have long been used to decorate homes in winter and make wreaths at Christmas. The tree was seen as a fertility symbol and a charm against witches, goblins and the devil. It was thought to be unlucky to cut down a holly tree.

### Uses of Holly wood

Holly wood is the whitest of all woods, and is heavy, hard and fine-grained. It can be stained and polished and is used to make furniture or in engraving work. It is commonly used to make walking sticks. Holly wood also makes good firewood and burns with a strong heat.

### Threats and conservation

The Holly Leaf Miner may cause damage to foliage and Holly Leaf Blight may cause dieback.

**Note:** Holly berries are not poisonous but are inedible.

## 9. A Mast Year - What is a mast year? – Notes taken from an article by the Woodland Trust

Every species of tree and shrub has a distinctive way of reproducing. Autumn is the prime time to see this and can help us recognise different species too. Acorns, conkers, winged seeds and an array of fruits, berries and cones make autumn's colourful leaf displays even more enjoyable.

**Every few years, some species of trees and shrubs produce a bumper crop of their fruits or nuts. The collective term for these fruits and nuts is 'mast', so we call this a mast year.**

Two of our most recognisable trees, oak and beech, fluctuate massively year on year in the amount of acorns and beech nuts they produce. Some years seem to have very little while in others, the nuts create a thick carpet beneath the trees.

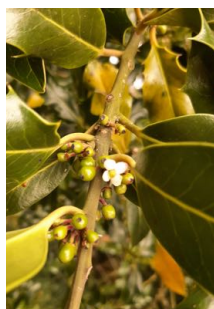
**2022 - Some of the trees producing bumper crops this year:**



**Beech**



**Sycamore**



**Holly**



**Hawthorn**

### **Why do trees produce bumper crops?**

One of the main theories for this behaviour is 'predator satiation'. Take oak and beech as an example again. Animals like squirrels, jays, mice and badgers feed on the acorns and beech nuts. When the trees produce smaller crops for a few consecutive years, they are in effect keeping the populations of these animals in check. But during a mast year, the trees produce more food than the animals can possibly eat.

This abundance causes a boom in populations of small mammals like mice. More importantly, it guarantees some will be left over to survive and grow into new trees. Mast years have a major evolutionary advantage for the tree. Producing nuts is costly work and slightly stunts the tree's growth, but as it tends to happen every 5-10 years, it's worth the payoff for some of the crop to germinate into new saplings.

### **How do trees communicate?**

Mast years are not just one off events for individual trees. The vast majority of trees in a particular species will have a fantastic crop all across the UK in the same year. How the trees co-ordinate this when they're so far apart is one of nature's many mysteries.

### **Did you know?**

Research has shown major mast years for beech trees are synchronised across all of northern and western Europe!

**Photographs by Jim Rae**

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