

Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

Eskrigg Reserve

March 2023 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:
SC 005538

1. Eskrigg Pond.

2nd March



JR

26th March



JR

2. Confirmed wildlife sightings at the Reserve during March.

a. Birds:

Blackbird, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Fieldfare, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose, Jay, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Mandarin, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Raven, Red Kite, Robin, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Stock Dove, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow, Willow Warbler, Woodcock, Woodpigeon, Wren.

b. Mammals:

Badger, Bank Vole, Hare, Mole, Red Squirrel, Rabbit, Roe Deer, Stoat.

c. Amphibians

Frog, Newt, Toad.



BT



JR

Photographs by Jim Rae (JR) & Brian Taylor (BT)

3. March 2023 Photo-gallery



Row 1: Toads (SL), Soldier Lichen (JR), Greylag Geese (AG)
Row 2 (JR): Hazel male catkins, Sprouting Larch needles, Hazel female flower
Row 3 (JR): Snowdrops, Turkey Tail fungus, Daffodils
Row 4 (BT): Goldfinch, Wren, Jay
Row 5 (BT): Blue Tit, Bank Vole, Woodpigeon

Photographs by Alison Gordon (AG), Stephen Lipton (SL), Jim Rae (JR), Brian Taylor (BT)

4. Construction and Maintenance Work during March.

Thu. 2 GTR Contracts Ltd. brought over a digger to start clearing the silt from the pond onto the banks. The Digger Driver, Johnny McWhir, first removed the Aluminium inspection ladder from the side of the pond and then started to clear the silt. However, there turned out to be a lot more silt than expected and it became obvious that the one, relatively small, digger would not be able to cope.



Meanwhile, **Braiden Watson**, helped **Jim** to clear some of the trees that had fallen over into the pond in recent years.



Fri. 3 **Johnny McWhir** arrived with a much larger excavator and brought colleague **Ross McCutcheon** with him. **Johnny** operated the large excavator while **Ross** operated the smaller digger.



Gordon Reid helped **Jim**, in the afternoon, to clear more fallen branches.

Sat. 4 Working as a team, Johnny and Ross continued with the clearing of the silt. Meanwhile, **Jim** and volunteer **Joe Borthwick**, continued clearing the trees round the edge of the pond.



Thu. 9 Castle Milk Forestry Staff replanted the area next to the Reserve with Scots Pine trees.



After digging out the silt at the beginning of March, the pond was left empty to settle for a week before the sluice was closed and the pond filled up again overnight. The pond had to be filled before the frogs and toads came back to breed on the 17th of March and the Mallard started laying.

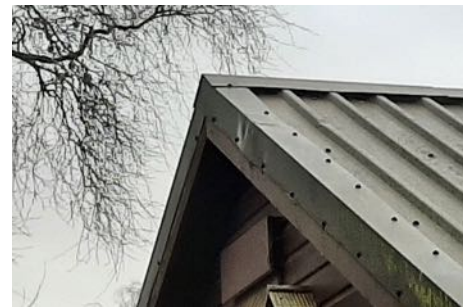


10.03.23



13.03.23

Sat. 18 Alan Thomson and his team fitted a metal roof to the Red Squirrel Hide, repaired the roof of the Eskrigg Centre that had been damaged during Storm Arwen and cut up the aluminium inspection ladder.



The Team (LtoR): Greig Gibson, Alan Thomson, William McEwan, Liam McNeillie.

Mon. 20 Jim took scrap metal objects to John Walker & Son, Annan, to be recycled.



Reinforcing Steel Mesh



Aluminium Ladder pieces



Cut-up Steel Base of Ladder

Photographs by Jim Rae

Thu. 23



In the morning, **Alastair Gordon** and **Jim** cut and fitted a timber space-bar under the edge of the new roof and re-attached the gutter to the front of the Red Squirrel Hide. In the afternoon, **Noah Nightingale** helped **Jim** shift some logs from beside the Compost toilet to the stack on the forest road.

Sat. 25 **Jim** moved the toilet seat and woodchip bin from the right vault to the left vault within the compost toilet. The contents of the right vault will be left to compost for the next two years.



Joe Borthwick helped **Jim** to clean the roof of the toilet building then treated the surrounding fence and toilet door with Algon. Later they cleared some logs and did the normal Saturday morning Dog Poo Patrol.



Mon. 27 **Tom Hargreaves** helped **Jim** fill in the potholes on the Eskrigg Farm road and forest road. They then tidied up the cemetery entrance.

5. Activities at the Reserve during March.



Mon. 6 Primary 7 pupils from **Mount Cameron Primary School, East Kilbride**, took part in a Nature Ramble at Eskrigg Reserve and Woodland Walks before going to Lockerbie Manor Adventure for a few days.

Photographs by Jim Rae

6. Plant of the Month - Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) Flowers: March – July

There are two forms of the Golden Saxifrage, the opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage and the alternate-leaved Golden Saxifrage (*C. alternifolium*). Round Eskrigg Reserve and Woodland Walks, in wet shady places, we have the opposite-leaved form.

It is a frequent plant of woodland flushes, stream sides, shady springs and wet rocks, usually on acid or calcium-deficient soils. It is a creeping perennial that forms mats of golden-green flowers.

The paired leaves, with slightly wavy-toothed margins, taper gradually melding with the stems, which are rounded, angular or sometimes square. The basal leaves are darker than the leaves around the flowers.

The flowers themselves actually lack petals, have eight stamens with tiny golden-yellow anthers, and are surrounded by four bright yellow-green sepals. There is an 8-lobed ring just within the sepals, which is probably the nectar-secreting disc to attract the pollinators. The two carpels per flower are fused together forming a single-celled ovary.

It is pollinated by small insects, such as springtails and small flies, or self-pollinated.



7. Animal of the Month - Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*) Reproduces – March

The Common Toad is easily recognized by its warty skin and mottled brown colour. It spends most of its life on land, returning to water only to breed. By day it lives among tree roots or in holes in hedgerows. Its diet consists of worms, snails and a wide range of insects, including beetles, ants and caterpillars.

Toads come out of hibernation in spring and make straight for suitable water in which to spawn. At Eskrigg Reserve, they normally start arriving at the pond, where they were born, on the 17th of March (33 out of the last 35 years).

On intercepting a female, often before they reach the water, the male attaches himself to her back, girdling her under her arms in an embrace called amplexus. When she is ready to lay, the female extrudes her jelly-coated eggs in a long string or rope which can be as long as 2-3m. She entwines it carefully among the stems of water plants. The male expels his milky sperm and so fertilises them. The female can lay up to 7,000 eggs. When she has jettisoned her load of eggs she leaves the pond. The male, however, may then seek other females, leaving the first eggs he sired to their fate.

A week after fertilization, the eggs change shape from round to oval. Shortly after this the young tadpoles begin to develop and the first traces of head, body and tail appear. They wriggle free of the jelly in another two weeks. With the various hazards they face, only a few tadpoles from any one batch of eggs will finally develop into adult toads.



Photograph by Jim Rae (JR), Sybille Spägle (SS)

**Average Daily People Count for March = 45
3 days (4, 10 & 23) with over 100**

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