

Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

Eskrigg Reserve

April 2023 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:
SC 005538

1. Eskrigg pond on the morning of 4 April.



2. Confirmed wildlife sightings at the Reserve during April.

a. Birds:

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

b. Mammals:

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

c. Amphibians

Frog, Newt, Tadpoles, Toad.

d. Insects

Green-veined White, Mayfly nymph, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Springtail, Stonefly, Water Beetle.

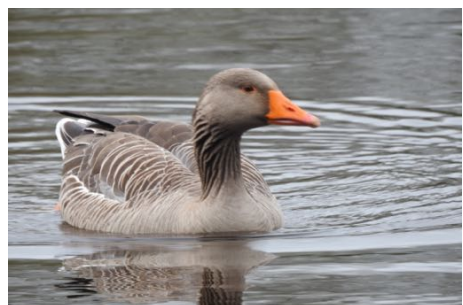
e. Others

Black Slug, Flatworm, Freshwater Shrimp, Spiders.



Photographs by Karen Evans (KE), Sybille Spägle (SS)

3. April 2023 Photo-gallery



Row 1: Robin (AD), Red Squirrel (AD), Dunnock (BT)
Row 2: Bank Vole (BT), Red Squirrel (AD), Small Tortoiseshell (BT)
Row 3: Blackbird (BT), Red Squirrel (JR), Treecreeper (JR)
Row 4: Greylag Goose (JR), Red Squirrel (AD), Rabbit (JR)
Row 5: Garlic Mustard (JR), Red Squirrel (AD), Primrose (JR)

Photographs by Alexander Dick (AD), Jim Rae (JR), Brian Taylor (BT)

4. Construction and Maintenance Work during April.

On several days throughout the month **Jim Rae** weeded the sides of the Reserve path.

Jim also took down the weathered Reserve signs, passed them on to **Scott McLean** who kindly sanded them down and then **Jim** put them back up again.

Mon. 24 Tom Hargreaves and **Jim** brushed the surfaces of the Shelter, Red Squirrel Hide and Eskrigg Centre, and treated the surfaces with Algon where necessary to kill the algae.

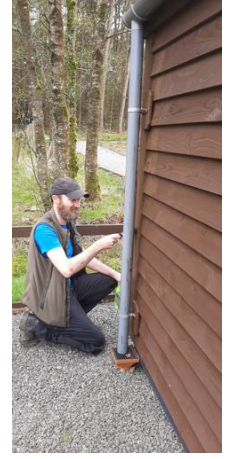
Fri. 28 Gordon Reid, Brian Mauson and **Jim** gave the shelter and toilet a coat of wood preservative in the morning. In the afternoon, **Jim** also coated the trellis and part of the access ramp to the Centre with preservative.



Tom



Brian



Gordon

5. Activities at the Reserve during April.

Fri. 14 Visit by youngsters from **Mid-Annandale Playcare (MAP).**



The group sampled the stream below the Reserve and found the following animals:
Flatworms, Mayfly Nymphs, Simulid Larvae, Annelid Worms and Freshwater Shrimps.

They then had a quick look at some pitfall traps and found:
Spiders and Springtails.

6. Vandalism

During the last few weeks there have been a number of incidences of vandalism within and near the Reserve.

- The lid of the Duck Feeder has been interfered with on a number of occasions and the jubilee clips that held it on were removed. Four new jubilee clips had to be purchased.
- The springs on the Duck Feeder were stretched out and made useless. Jim had to drive to Dundrennan to buy replacements and spares.
- Graffiti was written on the Information Boards in the Shelter, on the wall of the Red Squirrel Hide, on the wall of the Toilet, on the wall of the Centre, on the Jetty and on the Duck Feeder, using a marker pen. These took a long time to remove.
- The Door Catches on the Red Squirrel Hide and Kingfisher Hide were removed and new ones had to be bought and fitted.
- Drawing Board Clips were removed from two of the Eskrigg Flora Information Boards, and the notices left on the ground. New clips had to be bought.
- Two of the Eskrigg Flora Information Boards were swapped around.
- One of the Eskrigg Flora Information Boards and its post were pulled out, damaged and then discarded in a ditch.
- The tyres of the Off-road Trailer were let down and the valves removed. One of the tyres was brand new and now both may need replaced.

The cost of repairs and replacements is significant and could run into several hundred pounds.

Members and other visitors to the Reserve are asked to be vigilant and report anything untoward to **Jim**.

Photographs by Jim Rae

7. Plant of the Month – Colt's-foot (*Tussilago farfara*) - Flowers: March – April

Colt's-foot is a perennial plant that looks similar to a dandelion when it blooms in spring. This wild edible plant is unusual in that the flowers bloom and sometimes die before the appearance of any leaves, which earned Colt's-foot the name of "son before the father" in earlier times.

It grows in a range of habitats with open or disturbed ground, including arable land, waste ground, shingle and scree, even landslips. It grows particularly in waste, rough and cultivated places where there is poor drainage. It tolerates wet, poorly drained areas and riverbanks susceptible to spring flooding.

The Colt's-foot is one of the first wild flowers to appear in Spring. Its bright, yellow, composite flowers appear in March and April, before the leaves appear. The central yellow florets of the flower-heads are male, while the outer florets are female. Pollination is effected by bees and flies. The heads close up at night and in dull weather.



The single flowers are held on scaly, crimson stems. The stems are hollow and quite thick for the size of the plant, are covered in white felty hairs and have very short stubby over-lapping scales, which can



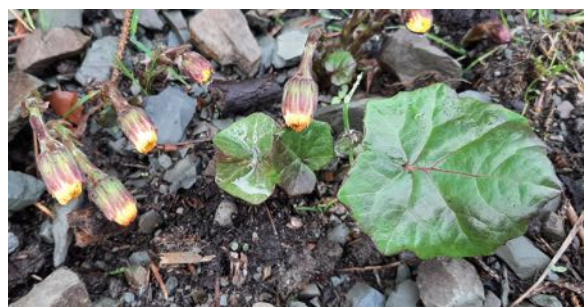
Colt's-foot seed head



Dandelion seed head

turn quite red after strong prolonged sunshine. The flowers have a distinct tendency to droop before fully opening and standing upright. Some people confuse these flowers with dandelion flowers. However, the seed 'clock' of the Colt's-foot is tidy and flat-topped, quite unlike the round 'clock' of the dandelion. The seeds of the Colt's-foot are long, cylindrical and brown.

As the flowers start to die back, flat-fans of dark green leaves appear. The top of the leaf surface is smooth and almost waxy in appearance, while the underside is covered with silver-white, wool-like hairs. When Colt's-foot leaves are young they are covered in a white 'cobweb' which eventually comes off. Well after the flowers are gone the leaves will grow as tall and large as Rhubarb leaves. Colt's-foot leaves are slightly dentate or cusped as if with bite-marks. Eventually the leaves grow up to 1.5m high and 0.7m across. When the flowers have gone and there are only leaves, the plant can be confused with Butterbur.



The Scottish name 'Tushylucky' and its variants are corruptions of the Latin *tussilago*, related to *tussis*, a cough. Historically the plant was been used as a remedy for coughs and colds and Colt's-foot preparations have long been used to soothe sore throats. This plant contains mucilage, bitter glycosides, and tannins; it is these that are thought to give the herb anti-inflammatory and antitussive (cough prevention and treatment) properties. The leaves were smoked as a cure for coughs and asthma. The plant was sometimes called Coughwort.

8. Animal of the month - Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*) - April



Male 'standing guard' on the pond.



Female on the nest on the 2nd island.

Length: 75 – 90cm; Weight: 2.7 – 4kg; Wingspan: 1.5-1.8m; Average lifespan: 12 years.

The Greylag goose is the largest breed of wild goose native to Britain and is common in Scotland. The bodies are grey-brown with a large head. The large bill is orange with a white tip and the legs and feet are flesh-pink. Flight feathers are moulted simultaneously so birds are flightless for about 4 weeks between May and August. Non-breeding pairs moult before breeding pairs. Greylags have loud cackling and honking calls. In Britain, the Greylags breed near bodies of freshwater, often on islands, and they visit local farms to feed. They eat roots, tubers, leaves, stems, flowers and seeds of plants such as grasses, sedges, rushes and cereals.

The nest is near fresh water, often under a tree or bush and comprises a mound of vegetation with sticks and lined with grass and feathers. Egg-laying starts in late March and the female incubates the clutch of 5-7 eggs while the male guards a small territory around the nest. The eggs hatch after about 28 days. The young can fly after 50 or 60 days. Families stay together for their first year.

- Greylags may be hunted in the wildfowling season.
- This species of geese is one of the last species to migrate, gaining them the name Greylag, as they 'lag' behind the other migrating geese.
- On the 29th of September, known as Michaelmas, the Greylag goose was traditionally eaten in remembrance of the archangel St. Michael.

9. Garden Escape within Reserve

The wild Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) is pictured on the left. The garden escape (*Anemone nemorosa* 'Vestal'), found on the sluice dyke, is pictured on the right.



Average Daily People Count for April = 32

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