

Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

Eskrigg Reserve

May 2023 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:
SC 005538

1. Eskrigg pond taken on the 28th of May by Sybille Spägele



2. Confirmed wildlife sightings at the Reserve during May

a. Birds:

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

b. Mammals:

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

c. Amphibians and Reptiles:

Frog & Toad Tadpoles, Common Lizard.

d. Insects:

Butterflies: Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Peacock.

Others: Alderfly, Long-horn Beetle

3. May 2023 Photo-gallery



Row 1 (JR): Bullfinch (M), Red Squirrel, Bullfinch (F)

Row 2 (JR): Cuckoo Flower with egg of orange-tip butterfly, Peacock Butterfly, Crab Apple Blossom

Row 3 (JR): Bugle, Wood Forget-me-not, Red Campion, Dog Violet, Lily of the Valley

Row 4 (RT): Weevil, Click Beetle, Eyed Ladybird pupa, St. Mark's Fly, Weevil

Row 5 (JR): Greater Stitchwort, Germander Speedwell, Adder's Tongue Fern, Marsh Thistle, Mouse-ear Chickweed

Photographs by Ruth Tobias (RT), Jim Rae (JR)

4. Construction and Maintenance Work during May

During the month, the Reserve Manager, Jim Rae, worked to trim, weed and rake the paths through the Reserve and parts of the Woodland Walks. He also carried out the weekly Dog Poo Patrol and regular wild flower surveys when he wasn't dealing with the consequences of the continuing vandalism.

Fri. 5 In the morning, **Gordon Reid, Brian Mauson and Jim Rae** adjusted the posts for the people counter and then treated the Centre ramp handrails with wood preservative.



Fri. 12 In the morning, **Gordon Reid, Brian Mauson and Jim Rae** cleared the self-seeded trees from the side of the forest road on part of the Northern Loop.

Fri. 19 **Gordon, Brian and Jim** continued clearing the self-seeded trees from parts of the Northern Loop and, for a while, were joined by a student from Lockerbie Academy.



Fri. 26 **Gordon and Jim** strimmed and raked the sides of the path through the reserve.

Sat. 27 **John Spence** helped **Jim** clear self-seeded trees from part of the Southern Loop whilst working towards a Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.

Mon. 29 **Jim** set up pitfall traps in preparation for the visit by **Georgetown Primary School** on the 1 June.

Tue. 30 **Zack Nicholson** spent an hour helping to clear the sides of the ditch beside the path round the Southern Loop.



5. Activities at the Reserve during May

Thu. 4 **Lockerbie Academy S3 Biology** students carried out a range of fieldwork activities including a stream study during which they found a species of Mayfly nymph (*Ephemera danica*) which had not been previously recorded at Eskrigg.



In the evening, **Lockerbie Scouts, Cubs and supporting adults** took part in [The Big Help Out](#) to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. They cleared a mass of cut tree branches from the side of the path on the Southern Loop below Eskrigg Reserve.



Mon. 8 It was a great pleasure to meet **Lily and Connie** at the Reserve. They were doing a Charity Walk from John O'Groats to Lands End to raise funds for 'Hero Paws' and 'Centre Point'.



Tue. 9 Tracy Whiteside, Yasir Abdullah, Janet Rogerson and Eleanor Little, from Lockerbie Academy, helped Jim tidy up the Northern Loop above Eskrigg Reserve.



Fri. 12 A second group of **Lockerbie Academy S3 Biology** students carried out a range of fieldwork activities.

Fri. 19 A third group of **Lockerbie Academy S3 Biology** students carried out a range of fieldwork activities.

Sun. 21 **Jim Rae** and **Debbie Bradley** took part in the **Walk the Walk**, organised by Lockerbie and District Rotary Club, round the Castle Loch at Lochmaben. Between them they raised £440 for the work of the Trust at Eskrigg Nature Reserve.

Tue. 23 **Children from the North West Community Campus Dumfries**, together with their teachers/carers visited the Reserve for a day of fun and exploration. After a brief introduction about the Reserve, they followed the **Gruffalo Trail** where they met and learned about some of Scotland's native wild animals. They then investigated the floor of a Scots Pine woodland and the bed of a small stream to find out what kinds of small animals lived there. During the lunch break they enjoyed the sunshine and a picnic in the heathland area.

6. Vandalism

Unfortunately the vandalism has continued throughout May without the person or persons responsible being identified. The Police are now involved. The main incidents this month were: The Plant Defence Information Board was smashed. The Door Catches on the Red Squirrel and Kingfisher Hides were removed or damaged several times. Many Drawing Board Clips used to attach the Eskrigg Flora Information Sheets were stolen. Posts holding Eskrigg Flora Information Sheets were pulled up and thrown in a ditch or onto the shelter roof. The Key Guard for the Compost Toilet was destroyed. Unfortunately, until it is replaced there will be no access to the toilet except between 8am and 5pm. The Duck Feeder was damaged several times and parts had to be replaced. Several Bird Feeders were damaged or stolen. Dedication Posts erected in memory of loved ones were pulled out of the ground and discarded. The Shelter wall was damaged. So far the cost of repair or replacement is just over £600.

7. Plant of the Month – Speedwells

Seven different forms of Speedwell have been identified in Eskrigg Reserve and Woodland Walks. Blue Water-speedwell, Brooklime, Field Speedwell, Germander Speedwell, Heath Speedwell, Thyme-leaved Speedwell, and Wood Speedwell.



Blue Water Speedwell (*Veronica anagallis-aquatica*)

Native. A plant of permanent wetlands, especially along rivers and larger streams but also ponds, lakes and other wetland habitats. Stems upright, to 60cm in height. Flowers pale-blue to lilac with darker veins, in long racemes emerging in pairs from opposite leaf bases.

Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*)

Native. Widespread in wet places both on damp mud and in permanent, often flowing, water. Flowers bright blue in spikes in the upper leaf axils. Whole plant hairless, the stems creeping and readily rooting at the nodes to form low, sprawling mats. Leaves broadly rounded.

**Field Speedwell (*Veronica persica*)**

Introduced and first recorded in the UK in the early 1800s. Found abundantly on all types of bare and disturbed ground, especially in arable and urban areas. Flowers blue with a paler, almost white lower petal, although some early-flowering forms can have large, all blue flowers, or rarely pink. All Field Speedwells have the flowers solitary in the leaf axils, not clustered into spikes.

Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*)

Native. Widespread in grassy places, especially roadsides, churchyards and old meadows. Flowers rich, deep blue, usually with a small white eye; carried in loose spikes in the upper leaf axils. Superficially similar to Wood Speedwell but leaves deep green and stems hairs arranged in two distinct lines on the stem (plants in shade can have more evenly distributed hairs).

**Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*)**

Native. Widespread in grassy places and shady woodlands on acid soils. A patch-forming perennial with downy stems and leaves and upright spikes of pale blue or pink flowers.

Thyme-leaved Speedwell (*Veronica serpyllifolia*)

Native. Common throughout much of the region in grassy places, especially woodland rides, lawns and churchyards. A patch-forming perennial with smooth, broad leaves and upright spikes of off white flowers with lilac-blue veins.

**Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*)**

Native. Widespread, though often rather local along paths and rides in woodland and shady places, especially if a little damp. Flowers pale lilac-blue, carried in loose spikes in the upper leaf axils. Superficially similar to Germander Speedwell but leaves yellowish-green and stems hairs evenly spread around the stem.

8. Animal of the month – Orange-tip Butterfly (*Anthocharis cardamines*)

The first butterflies to be seen each year are ones that survive the winter by hibernating in adult form. Species such as the brimstone and peacock can even be seen on mild winter days. Not many butterflies are born from pupae as early as April but the orange-tip usually manages this feat. This year the adults started to emerge in and around the reserve at the end of April.

The male orange-tip is one of our most striking butterflies. Its white fore-wings have an obvious fiery orange band across their tips which can be clearly seen in flight. The orange tips warn predators that this butterfly is highly distasteful.



Females have no orange coloration and are predominantly white on the uppersides. Both male and female have intricately marked mossy green and white hind-wings which provide useful camouflage when they roost on flower heads such as those of Cow Parsley.

The orange-tips are generally found close to the types of plants the females lay their eggs on and on which their caterpillars feed. In marshy grassland the preferred plant is the Cuckoo Flower (*Cardamine pratensis*), whereas along hedgerows, road verges and woodland edges Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is chosen.



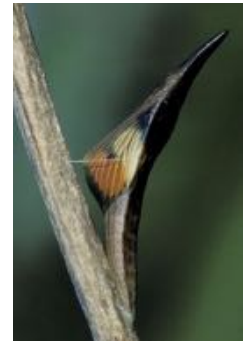
Life Cycle

The females lay single, pale, greenish white, spindle-shaped eggs on the underside of the flower buds. These eggs turn deep orange after a few days.



The caterpillars, or larvae, hatch from May to July and feed on their empty egg cases and the developing seed pods of their host plant. They are ochre when they first hatch, but turn green with a mottled black pattern and fine white hairs as they mature in up to four weeks. They are extremely hard to spot. Orange-tip caterpillars are cannibalistic, liable to eat another of their own species should they meet.

From late June onwards each caterpillar forms a distinctive, pointy pupa, resembling a thorn that starts off green and turns brown. They overwinter in this form.



The adults emerge in late April and will be seen throughout May and much of June and possibly even July. They emerge from the pupa with a wingspan of 45-50mm. Adult orange-tips drink nectar from Bluebells, Brambles, Dandelions, Garlic Mustard and Red Campion, amongst other plants.

Average Daily People Count for May = 83
The busiest days were over the Coronation Weekend with
counts of 111 on the Saturday and 118 on the Sunday.

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