

# Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

## Eskrigg Reserve

### September 2023 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:  
SC 005538

1. Eskrigg Pond on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September. Note the rainbow lighting up the Eskrigg Farm building.



2. Confirmed wildlife sightings at the Reserve during September

a. Birds:

Blackbird, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Collared Dove, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose, Grey Wagtail, House Sparrow, Jay, Kingfisher, Lesser Redpoll, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Reed Bunting, Robin, Rook, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Stock Dove, Swallow, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow, Woodpigeon, Wren.

b. Mammals:

Bank Vole, Common Shrew, Fox, Hare, Mole, Rabbit, Red Squirrel, Roe Deer, Stoat, Woodmouse.

c. Amphibians and Reptiles:

Frog, Toad, Lizard.

d. Insects:

**Butterflies:** Green-veined White, Peacock, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Small White, Wall.

**Moths:** Twenty-plume Moth.

**Others:** Diving Beetle, **Emperor Dragonfly (new species).**

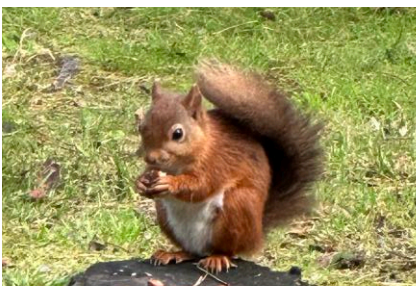
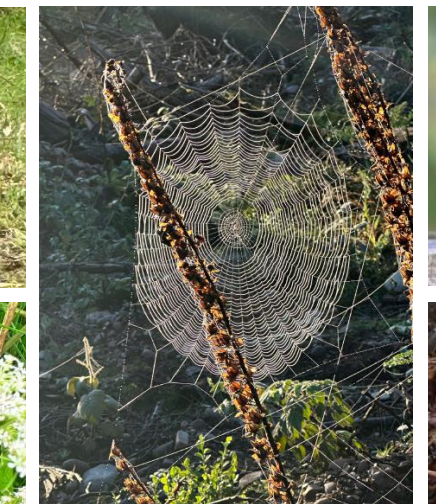
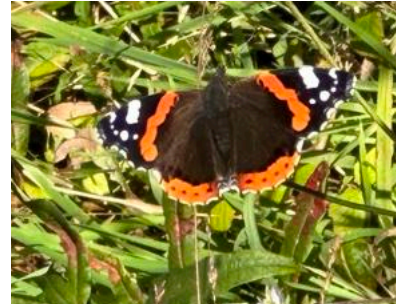


Underside of a  
Twenty-plume Moth

Photographs by Jim Rae



### 3. September 2023 Photo-gallery



Row 1: Stoat (SF), Plums and Custard (JR), Stoat (SF)  
Row 2 (JR): Small Tortoiseshell, Red Squirrel, Red Admiral  
Row 3 (JR): Stinkhorn, Red Squirrel, Deadly Webcap  
Row 4: Red Squirrel (JR), Spider's Web (JR), Red Squirrel (BT)  
Row 5 (JR): Common Inkcap, Spider's Web, Wood Hedgehog

Photographs by Stephen Fearon (SF), Jim Rae (JR), Brian Taylor (BT)



#### 4. Construction and Maintenance Work during September

**Sybille Spägele** helped at the reserve during the first week of September.

**Wed. 6** In the morning, **Jim Rae** strimmed several areas of the Reserve while **Sam Pattinson** raked up the cuttings and did some pruning of branches. In the afternoon **Jim** strimmed and raked some other areas.



**Fri. 8** **Gordon Reid** and **Jim** strimmed and raked the west-facing slope of the Northern Loop in the morning and **Jim** tidied the east-facing slope in the afternoon.



**Sun. 10** **Jim** cleared the area where a pine tree had been planted in memory of Queen Elizabeth II. Unfortunately, the tree had not survived the early part of the year and **Jim** transplanted another Scots Pine to replace it.



**Mon. 11** **Tom Hargreaves** helped **Jim** to strim and rake the final section of the Northern Loop.

**Thu. 14** **Jim** took delivery of a third dog bin from **D & G Council**.

**Fri. 15** **Sam** and **Jim** spent the morning clearing branches from the first 50m of the forest road from the cemetery entrance. **Jim** then continued the work in the afternoon.



**Sat. 16** **Jim** spent the day barrowing top soil from beside the forest road to the side of the Kingfisher Walk to make it easier for the amphibians to get across the path, to and from the pond, in March each year.

**Sun. 17** **Jim** cleared the site beside the forest road for a new storage container and created a car parking area beside it.



**Mon. 18** **Jim** cleared branches from the sides of the forest road.

Photographs by Jim Rae



**Mon. 25 Douglas Currie**, from **J. J. Currie**, delivered a 10ft container, mounted it on 4" x 4" timbers and made sure it was level. The container will be used for storing some Reserve equipment.

**Fri. 29 Scott McLean**, joiner, attached insulation to the ceiling and walls of the container and then fixed a timber lining to the walls.



Also, on the 29<sup>th</sup>, **Brian Mauson** and **Gordon Reid** helped **Jim** to prune the bushes and trim the sides of the path to the Kingfisher Hide in the morning and **Jim** completed the path in the afternoon.

**Sat. 30 Jim** completed his regular Saturday morning 'Dog Poo and Litter Patrol'. He was rather disappointed to find that the amount of dog dirt being left by dog walkers was on the increase again.

## 5. Activities involving the Lockerbie Wildlife Trust during September

**Sat. 2 Graham Ovens** brought his family to explore the Reserve and Woodland Walks.



**Tue. 12** The Reserve was visited by some members of **Jim Rae's Glasgow University Honours Zoology Class 1969-70** and their partners. A good day was had by all. They particularly enjoyed watching the red squirrels

**Fri. 15** Visit by **Carlisle U3A Bird and Nature Group**.

**Thu. 28 Jim Rae** received a donation of £250 from the **Tesco** store in Lockerbie towards the upkeep of Eskrigg Nature Reserve. On behalf of Lockerbie Wildlife Trust, he thanked the Tesco staff and customers for their generosity.



Photographs by Jim Rae

## 6. Animal of the Month – Garden Spider (*Araneus diadematus*)



Dorsal View



Web



Ventral View

The Garden Spider is the most common orb web spider in the UK and is often found in gardens, hence its common name. It is also known as the Cross Spider or the Diadem Spider. It occurs in a wide range of habitats, grasslands, heathlands, moorlands, farmlands, wetlands, woodlands, towns and gardens, wherever the structure can accommodate an orb web up to 40cm in diameter and 2.5m in height.

The spider is usually grey-brown or reddish-brown in colour, with a large white cross (made up of pale spots and streaks) on its abdomen. The females are twice the size of males.

They sit in the middle of the web waiting to feel the vibrations of a struggling insect caught on the sticky threads. They then rush out and wrap their prey tightly in silk to stop them from moving – finishing the job with a venomous bite.

If you accidentally disturb a Garden cross spider on its web it will use its legs to oscillate itself up and down and shake the web, and if it is very severely disturbed, it will drop from its web on a silk thread and lie still until it is convinced the danger has passed on and then it will climb back to its web.

Pregnant females are particularly noticeable because of their large body, swollen with eggs. Pregnant females look much fatter than other spiders. They protect their eggs by building a silk egg sac into which they lay their eggs. Once filled with eggs a female will not leave the sac, she will spend her life protecting it and she will eventually die in late autumn before her spiderlings hatch in the following May.

In May, a mass of young spiderlings each with yellow abdomen and a dark patch will hatch out of the egg sac. Once hatched they collect together into a bright yellow bundle of tiny spiders and, if disturbed, they will wildly scatter, only reassembling when the danger has moved on. After their first moult they will separate, living individually and maturing into fully grown adult spiders after two years.

### Did you know?

Spider silk is amazingly lightweight: a strand of silk long enough to go all the way around the Earth would weigh less than 500 grams - that's the same as a bag of sugar! It's also as strong as Kevlar, the material used to make bulletproof vests.

Note: the two pictures of the Garden Spider were downloaded from the internet.  
The picture of the web was taken by Jim Rae.



## 7. Plant of the Month – Holly

The **Common Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)** is an evergreen shrub or small tree but can reach heights of up to 25m. It is native in the UK and across Europe, North Africa and western Asia. It is common in woodland, scrub and hedgerows, especially in oak and beech woodland. The bark is smooth, silvery-grey, becoming warted with age. The young twigs are usually bright green, slightly downy, becoming smooth and shiny. The leaves are dark green, glossy and oval. Younger plants have spiky leaves, and the lower leaves of older trees are also prickly to discourage browsing by deer for example. Leaves in the upper parts of the tree, above 3m, are more likely to be smooth except at the leaf-tip.

Holly is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers occur on different trees. Flowers are white with four petals. According to some sources, they bloom any time between early spring and the very beginning of summer, others say May to July. The flowers are fragrant. The male flowers have large anthers and an abortive ovary, whereas the female flowers have a large ovary and small anthers. Once pollinated by insects, female flowers develop into scarlet berries which can remain on the tree throughout winter. Each berry contains four seeds embedded in its pulpy flesh. These are dispersed in the droppings of birds, especially thrushes, fieldfares and redwings.

Note: Some male holly trees at Eskrigg Reserve are flowering at the moment – September/October. Many female trees are carrying an abundance of berries. Female bushes without a male nearby will not produce any fruit.

### 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 flowers provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars of the holly blue butterfly, along with those of various moths, including the yellow-barred brindle, double-striped pug and the holly tortrix. The berries are a vital source of food for birds in winter, and small mammals, such as wood mice and dormice.

### Mythology and symbolism

Holly branches have long been used to decorate homes in winter. 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

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. Holly branches are still used to decorate homes and make wreaths at Christmas.

### Threats and conservation

The holly leaf miner may cause damage to foliage and holly leaf blight may cause dieback.



Male flower



Female flowers



Holly berries

Photographs by Jim Rae

People count for September = 2097

Average 70 per day / Busiest day - Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> with 112 visitors

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