

Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

Eskrigg Reserve

December 2023 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:
SC 005538

1. View across Eskrigg Pond (taken at 6.30am on the 10th of December by Jim Rae).



2. Reported wildlife sightings at the Reserve during December.

a. Birds:

Blackbird, Blackcap, Blue Tit, Brambling, Bullfinch, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Goshawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Heron, Greylag Geese, Hooded Crow, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Jay, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Raven, Redwing, Robin, Rook, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Stock Dove, Treecreeper, Waxwing, Woodpigeon, Wren.

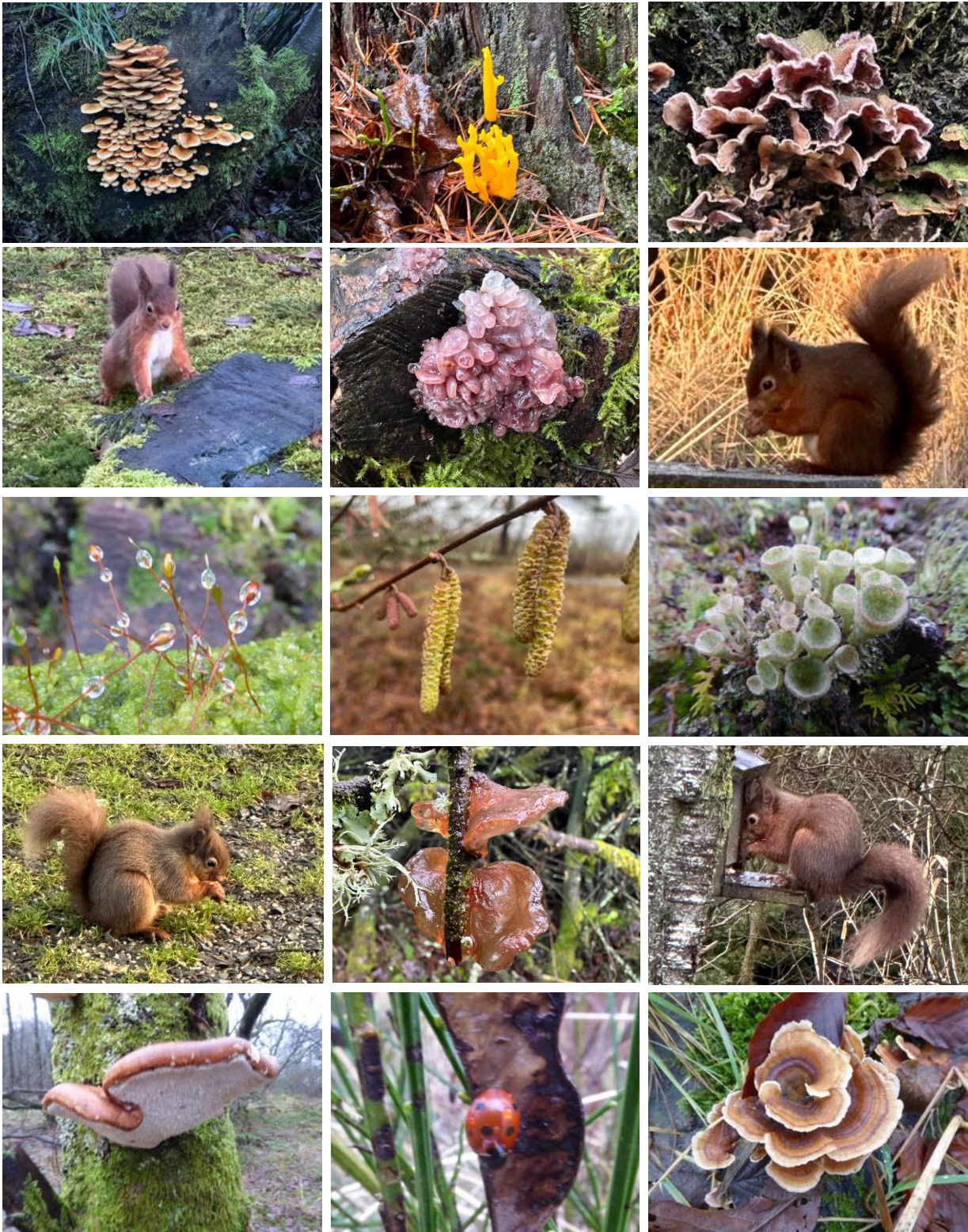
b. Mammals:

Bank Vole, Fox, Grey Squirrel, Mole, Red Squirrel, Roe Deer, Stoat, Woodmouse.



In memory of Bob Little who
took the photograph of the
Goshawk 21 Sept., 2017.

3. December 2023 Photo-gallery.



Row 1: Sulphur Tuft, Yellow Stagshorn, Silverleaf Fungus

Row 2: Red Squirrel, Purple Jellydisc, Red Squirrel

Row 3: Water droplets on moss spore capsules, Hazel catkins, *Cladonia pyxidata*

Row 4: Red Squirrel, *Exidia recisa*, Red Squirrel

Row 5: Birch Polypore, 7-spot Ladybird on Broom pod, Hairy Curtain Crust

Photographs by Jim Rae

4. Construction and Maintenance Work during December.

Fri. 15 **Ross Gemmell**, assisted by **James Hall**, felled and cut up the overgrown and wind-blown willows along the soak-away, at the south end of the Reserve.

Gordon Reid and **Jim Rae** helped clear away some of the branches during the morning.



Four pupils from Lockerbie Academy, **Archie Dalglish**, **Levi Houston**, **Ben Karim** and **Aaron Howatson**, together with their teacher **David Warner**, from Lockerbie Academy, came down in the afternoon to help clear away some of the cut branches and logs.

Mon. 18 & Thu. 21 **Jim** raked up fallen leaves in the area of the Red Squirrel Hide and along several sections of the Reserve path and Woodland Walks.

Fri. 22 Several large trees were blown down across the **Pipeline Walk** during the previous night's storm and **Jim** cut away some of the branches. However, Castle Milk forestry workers will need to be contacted and the trees dealt with in the New Year.



Fri. 29 **Gordon Reid (1)**, **Brian Mauson (2)** and **Sybille Spägle (3)** helped **Jim** clear away more of the logs and branches from the soak-away.



5. Activities involving the Lockerbie Wildlife Trust during December.



Fri. 01 & Sat. 02 **Lockerbie Wildlife Trust** ran a Christmas Stall in the foyer at **Tesco, Lockerbie** between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm each day, in order to raise funds for the management of **Eskrigg Nature Reserve**. The Trust would like to thank the staff at Tesco and all the customers who supported the Reserve. **Jim** would also like to thank all those who helped man the stall over the two days.

Thu. 07 **Jim** gave a talk about **Eskrigg Reserve** to the ladies of the **Waterbeck SWI**.

Photographs by **Jim Rae**

Thu. 14 Jim started setting up a **Christmas Tree Trail** - 6 decorated Christmas Trees (1 medium sized at the shelter & 5 small) plus 10 Conifer Tree Information Boards along the Reserve path.



Example of Conifer Tree Information Board



Fri. 15 Mairi Pringle, Gordon Pringle, Sybil Williamson and Jim pinned up some sheets in the shelter giving information about the Christmas Tree Trail, the history of Christmas trees and Christmas tree decorations. Mairi also provided some cushions and children's story-books about trees, so that youngsters and adults alike could sit in comfort and learn about the Christmas traditions.



The group then went along to the Eskrigg Centre and attached a large, **Knitted Christmas Tree** to the north-facing wall. Many thanks to the **Lockerbie Ladies Craft Group** for donating yet another fine piece of craftsmanship to Eskrigg Nature Reserve.



Sat. 16 The '**Christmas Tree Trail**' was officially opened at 10am.



Visitors arriving at the Reserve Car Park were welcomed by **Jim** and members of **Lockerbie and District Rotary Club** at the Rotary Trailer, where an assortment of goods was on sale. Lockerbie Wildlife Trust was marketing 2024 Calendars, Christmas Cards and Notelets. Rotary members were selling Timber Christmas Trees, Trugs, Bird Boxes and Feeders. The raw materials for the Rotary items were donated by local firms and all proceeds will be used to support a range of charities.

Thu. 28 Jim Rae and Sybille Spägele cleared the Christmas Tree Trail, but left up the Knitted Christmas Tree to dry out when the weather improves. The Conifer Tree Information Boards were also left up.

Photographs by Jim Rae

6. Plant of the Month - The Rowan Tree (*Sorbus aucuparia*).



The Rowan is native to Northern Europe. It is also known as the 'Mountain Ash' due to the fact that it grows well at high altitudes and its leaves are similar to those of the Ash tree, *Fraxinus excelsior*. However, the two species are not related. As one of our most hardy native broadleaves, the Rowan will survive on exposed sites and can be found higher up in the mountains than most other native trees. It has a life span of 120 years, or more, and can grow to 15 metres tall. Its smooth bark is usually silvery grey or grey-brown in colour. The leaf buds are purple and hairy.

Leaves: These are arranged alternately, though you may have to look really closely as at a quick glance they may look like they're



opposite. They are divided pinnately into leaflets (like a feather), with 5–8 pairs of leaflets arranged opposite to each other, plus one 'terminal' leaflet at the end. Each leaflet is long, oval and toothed. The leaves turn a reddish colour in the autumn. The tree is often browsed by deer and the leaves are eaten by the caterpillars of a number of moths. The Rowan is known to support 58 different species of insects.



Flowers: Rowan is hermaphrodite, meaning each flower contains both male and female reproductive parts. The heavily scented flowers are borne in dense clusters, each one bearing five creamy-white petals.

Fruit: After successful pollination by insects, the flowers develop into berries, rich in vitamin c, which ripen to a distinctive red colour in the autumn and



provide food for many birds, including the Blackbird, Fieldfare, Mistle Thrush, Redstart, Redwing, Song Thrush and Waxwing.

The berries are sour, but because of their high vitamin c content, they were at one time turned into a drink to combat scurvy. They are still used today to make a jelly to accompany meats or into a tart jam.

Wood: The wood is pale yellow-brown with a deeper-brown heartwood. It is strong, tough and flexible, but not particularly durable. It was traditionally used for making tool handles and sometimes longbows. It is sometimes used in turnery, furniture, craftwork and engraving.

Did you know?

The Rowan is also known as 'Quickbeam', 'Wicken' or 'Witchwood', and has more mystical and folkloric associations than any other tree. In the past, superstitious residents planted rowan trees outside houses and in churchyards to ward off witches. Its old Celtic name, 'fid na ndruid', means wizards' tree. Each berry has a tiny five-pointed star or pentagram opposite its stalk - the pentagram is an ancient protective symbol.

More recently, this favourable tree came second to the Scots Pine in the running for Scotland's national tree.

Photographs by Jim Rae

7. Animal of the Month - The Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*).



A fully grown Roe Deer can weigh up to 25kg. Its coat colour varies throughout the year being rusty red in summer and a dull slate grey in winter. Males are called bucks; females are does and the young are kids. Both sexes have a prominent white rump and no visible tail. Does have a small 'tush' or tuft of hair at the base of the rump patch in winter. Roe Deer have large black eyes, noses, and mouths surrounded by white/pale areas. They have large ears. Bucks have small antlers, which have three points each when fully grown.

They use well-worn paths across their range along which you may find faeces. Other characteristic signs are frayed areas of small trees where they rub on overhanging branches and disturbed areas of soft ground and vegetation which deer have scraped and dug with their hooves. They also urinate to mark their territory.

Records of Roe Deer date to before the Mesolithic period (6,000 to 10,000 years BC). They are abundant throughout the UK but are not found in Northern Ireland. At one stage Roe Deer suffered an almost catastrophic decline due to over-hunting and deforestation. This was reversed during the 20th century due to woodland planting. Roe Deer are particularly associated with the edges of woodlands and forests. They are also found in areas with copses and scrub and use agricultural fields. They are increasingly entering areas closer to our towns and cities as they take advantage of more urban habitats. It is now essential to balance the needs of a sustainable healthy population of Roe Deer with those of the environment.



Roe leave small hoof prints, about 4cm long in soft ground.

Life Cycle: The rut, or breeding season, occurs between mid-July and mid-August. Bucks become aggressive and maintain exclusive territories around one or more does prior to the rut. Fights between bucks can result in serious injury or death with the winner taking over the loser's territory or attendant doe. Courtship involves chasing between the buck and doe for some time until the doe is ready to mate. Although mating occurs in late summer, the fertilised egg does not implant and grow until January. This is thought to be an adaptation to avoid giving birth during harsh northern winters. The gestation period is nine months (four months of no embryonic growth followed by five months of foetal growth) with kids (usually two or three) being born May – June. Heavy mortality may occur shortly after birth and during the first winter. Roe Deer do not maintain exclusive territories but live within overlapping home ranges. Males mate with several females and females mating with several males has also been observed.

Roe Deer are solitary, but may form small groups in winter. They are active throughout the 24-hour period but make more use of open spaces during the hours of darkness in populations experiencing frequent disturbance. Peak times of activity are at dawn and dusk. Long periods are spent 'lying up' where the deer lies down to ruminate between feeding bouts.

Both sexes make dog-like barking noises when startled or alarmed. During the breeding season the does attract bucks with a high-pitched piping call. Bucks respond with a rasping noise during courtship. Young Roe Deer make a high-pitched whistle to attract their mothers when they become lost.

The above account has been extracted by Jim Rae from an article by the British Deer Society.
Photographs by Jim Rae

Total people count for December = 1,200
Average number per day = 39
Boxing Day = 106

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