

# Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

## Eskrigg Reserve

### January 2024 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:  
SC 005538

#### 1. January 1st at Eskrigg pond.



#### 2. Reported wildlife sightings at the Reserve during January.

##### a. Birds:

Blackbird, Blackcap, Blue Tit, Brambling, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Cormorant, Dunnock, Fieldfare, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, **Greylag Goose**, Hooded Crow, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Jay, Kestrel, Kingfisher, Lesser Redpoll, Little Grebe, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Mallard, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Raven, Redwing, Reed Bunting, Robin, Rook, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Stock Dove, Stonechat, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow, Woodpigeon, Wren.

##### b. Mammals:

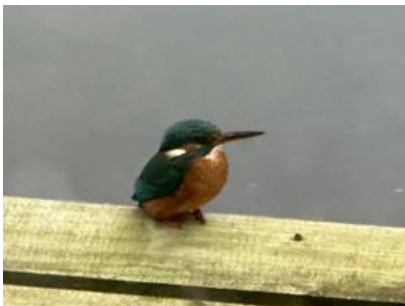
Bank Vole, Fox, Hare, Mole, Otter, Rabbit, **Red Squirrel**, Roe Deer, Woodmouse.



Photographs by Sybille Spägle (SS), Steve Fearon (SF) & Jim Rae (JR)



### 3. January 2024 Photo-gallery.



**Row 1 (JR): Hair Ice, St Andrews Cross pattern in the sky, Wild Angelica with frosted seed heads**

**Row 2 (GJK): Red Squirrel, Sparrowhawk, Jay**

**Row 3 (JR): Pond covered in ice, Red Squirrel, Pond covered with snow**

**Row 4 (JR): Kingfisher, Brooklime, Kingfisher**

**Row 5: Bank Vole (BT), Nuthatch (BT), Otter (AF)**

**Photographs by Anthony Fox (AF), Gary Jm Kerr (GJK), Brian Taylor (BT), Jim Rae (JR)**



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

**Wed. 03** When opening up at 8.00 am, the Reserve Manager found the door of the Red Squirrel Hide had been forced open and the mortice lock removed. Until the lock is replaced, a stone has to be placed in front of the door to stop it being blown open causing further damage.



**Fri. 05** **Gordon Reid, Brian Mauson and Sybille Spägele** helped **Jim Rae** to clear some more of the logs and branches from the soak-away and also fell and clear trees that were overhanging the path.

**Mon. 08** Forest workers from **Castlemilk Estate** cleared some wind-blown trees from the Pipeline Walk.

**Tue. 09** In the morning, **Jim** took down the knitted Christmas Tree and stripped two of the small wooden trees of Christmas decorations. In the afternoon he raked a 150m section of the pipeline walk.



**Wed. 10** **Gordon and Jim** filled in some of the potholes on the Eskrigg Farm road.

**Fri. 12** In the morning, **Zack Nicholson, Gordon and Jim** filled in more potholes. After lunch, **Jim** filled in more potholes and towards the end of the afternoon he had help from some pupils from **Lockerbie Academy** to finish the job.



**Sat. 20** This time, when **Jim** carried out his weekly **Dog Poo Patrol**, he was very disappointed to have to gather up 33 dog poos along a 1 km stretch of path.



**Mon. 22** Following the strong winds of the previous days, **Jim** raked up the leaves and twigs from several paths, cleared two trees that had fallen on the forest road and one that was across the Pipeline Walk. The duck feeder had also been knocked or blown over in the storms and the plastic casing has split. The feeder will have to be replaced. For the second time this month, the path at the pedestrian access to the Reserve Car Park was washed away by flood water from the choked ditch on the other side of the farm road.



**Wed. 24** **Jim** felled a birch tree, that had partially come down across the feeder burn, so that the stump fell back into place and he then cut off some of the branches.

**Thu. 25** **Ross Gemmell** kindly helped **Jim** by winching the birch tree clear of the burn and cutting it up further so that Jim could tidy the site.



**Fri. 26** In the morning, **Gordon Reid** helped **Jim** to repair the part of the path at the car park that was washed away. In the afternoon, **Jim** cut up some fallen trees and then the group from **Lockerbie Academy** helped him tidy the path to the Kingfisher Hide.

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

**Wed. 17** **Dr. David Borthwick** gave a fascinating talk to members of the Lockerbie Wildlife Trust, and others, some on Zoom, about the **Folklore of Barnacle Geese**.

Photographs by Jim Rae

## 6. Plant of the Month - Hazel (*Corylus avellana*).



Hazel bush in June

The Hazel bushes/trees at the Reserve are not coppiced, but left to grow. They can reach a height of 12m and could live for 80 years or more. The smooth, grey-brown bark will peel with age. The stems are hairy and bendy. The trunks are often covered in mosses, liverworts and lichens, and the fiery milkcap fungus grows in the soil beneath.



Hazel bush in February



female flowers

Hazel is monoecious, meaning that both male and female flowers are found on the same tree, although hazel flowers must be pollinated by pollen from other hazel trees. The clusters of green, immature, male catkins appear in the autumn. They expand, start producing pollen and turn yellow in January/February. Female flowers are tiny and bud-like with red styles.



male catkins

Hazel flowers provide early pollen as a food for bees. However, bees find it difficult to collect and can only gather it in small loads. This is because the pollen of wind-pollinated hazel is not sticky and each grain actually repels against another.



Leaves: Hazel is found growing in all parts of Scotland, including the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland. The leaves are oval, doubly toothed, hairy and pointed at the tip. They turn yellow before falling in the autumn. Hazel leaves provide food for the caterpillars of moths, including the large emerald, small white wave, barred umber and nut-tree tussock.



Fruits: Once pollinated by wind, the female flowers develop into oval fruits which hang in groups of one to four. Each matures into a nut with a woody shell surrounded by a cup of leafy bracts (modified leaves). Hazelnuts are also eaten by woodpeckers, nuthatches, tits, wood pigeons, jays and small mammals such as red squirrels, bank voles and woodmice.

The species is not known to suffer from any particular pest or disease, but occasionally it may be attacked by aphids, gall mites and sawflies.



## 7. Animal of the Month - Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*).

This beautiful bird is easy to recognise thanks to its bright blue and metallic copper colours. Kingfishers have been seen several times lately at the reserve, feeding in the pond. This female was photographed by Jim with his mobile phone, from inside the Centre with the window closed, on Sunday 28th January at 08.33hrs. (The female's lower mandible has a reddish base whereas a male has an all-black bill.) She tended to sit still on the jetty, while looking down into the water searching for prey, and then she plunge-dived in and out in seconds with her catch. She stunned the stickleback by hitting it against the jetty twice and manoeuvred the fish so that was pointing head-first down her throat. She then held it for quite a while (perhaps to ensure that it was unconscious or dead) before putting her head back and swallowing it. After eating two fish she flew, fast and straight, over to the 'Kingfisher Hide' where she carried on feeding.

Kingfishers tend to inhabit slow-flowing rivers, lakes, reservoirs and gravel pits, breeding in tunnels excavated in vertical sandy or earthen banks by both parents. In winter they frequently visit the coast. The Kingfishers that come to Eskrigg Nature Reserve normally live and feed along stretches of the river Annan but, when the water level rises and the flow rate increases after heavy rain, they come up to Eskrigg pond where they can hunt more easily or simply enjoy a change of menu.

The Kingfishers feed on aquatic insects such as mayflies, stoneflies, dragonfly nymphs and water beetles and their larvae as well as minnows in the streams and the sticklebacks in the pond. They have a shrill, penetrating whistle: 'zee' or 'chree' or a double note 'zee-tee' or 'chee-kee,' often given in flight.

The birds pair up in February or March and the first clutches are laid in early April. There are normally 5-7 eggs which are incubated by both parents for 19-21 days. Both sexes will then feed the young until they leave the nest after 23-27 days. The young become independent a few days after leaving the nest and the parents may attempt to raise a second brood. Kingfishers can be seen all year round.

Photographs by Jim Rae

**Total people count for January = 1,550**  
**Average number per day = 50**



### Statistics

Length: 15-17cm

Wingspan: 25cm

Weight: 40g

Average lifespan: 2 years

### Conservation status:

Classified in the UK as Green under the Birds of Conservation Concern 5: the Red List for Birds (2021). Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

**Jim Rae (Eskrigg Reserve Manager)**

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