

# Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

## Eskrigg Reserve

### February 2024 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:  
SC 005538

1. Eskrigg Pond - photograph taken at 3.30pm on Tuesday 27th February.



2. Reported wildlife sightings at the Reserve during February.

**a. Birds:**

Blackbird, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Cormorant, Dunnock, Fieldfare, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Greylag Goose, Hooded Crow, Jackdaw, Jay, **Kingfisher**, **Little Grebe**, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, **Mallard**, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Pink-footed Goose, Pintail, Raven, Red Kite, 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, Stoat, Woodmouse.



Photographs by Stephen Fearon (SF) and Jim Rae (JR)

3. February 2024 Photo-gallery.



**Row 1 (JP): Red Squirrel, Hen Pheasant, Red Squirrel**  
**Row 2 (JP): Coal Tit, Red Squirrel, Great Tit**  
**Row 3 (JP): Blue Tit, Blackbird, Goldfinch**  
**Row 4 (JP): Long-tailed Tit, Red Squirrel, Long-tailed Tit**  
**Row 5 (AS): Chaffinch, Red Squirrel, Blue Tit**

Photographs by Jaroslaw Powalski (JP), Jim Rae (JR), Alan Strong (AS)



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

**Fri. 02** In the morning, **Jim Rae** and **Bryan Woods** collected some timber from **James Jones and Sons** for replacing a gatepost at the car park and for putting new edging along the sides of the Reserve path.

In the afternoon, three lads from Lockerbie Academy (LtoR **Aaron Howatson**, **Archie Dalglish** and **Ben Karim**) helped Jim to replace and level the boards at the side of the Kingfisher Walk.



**Sat. 03** **Alan Thomson's lads** (Blacksmith) put the tin roof on the container in the morning while **Jim** was doing the Saturday morning Dog Poo Patrol.



**Wed. 07** **Jim Rae** cut back the branches of the windblown trees down the Pipeline Walk in the morning and raked the Bilberry Walk in the afternoon.

**Thu. 08** **Gordon Reid** and **Jim Rae** raked most of the Larch Walk.



**Fri. 16** In the morning, **Brian Mauson**, **Gordon Reid** and **Jim Rae** started replacing the old, rotting boards along the sides of the path through the Reserve using fresh timbers and pegs gifted by **James Jones & Sons Ltd.**



In the afternoon, four lads from Lockerbie Academy, (LtoR: **Ben Karim**, **Archie Dalglish**, **Levi Houston** and **Aaron Howatson**) resurfaced the section of the Kingfisher Walk they had been working on with 10mm gravel.

**Mon. 19** **Jim** raked the top of the Larch walk (1) and start of the Pipeline walk (2).

**Tue. 20** **Jim** raked the area of forest road in front of the storage containers (3).



**Fri. 23** In the morning, **Gordon Reid** and **Jim Rae** filled some of the potholes on the Eskrigg Farm Road. In the afternoon, **Archie Dalglish**, **David Warner** and **Aaron Howatson** helped **Jim** fill in some more potholes.

Photographs by Jim Rae

#### 5. NERC Frog Study - Project Tadpole - A novel testing paradigm to identify and manage multiple stressor impacts on wildlife.

**Thu. 29** **Dr. France Orton** (Project Leader) and PhD student **Jude**, from **Heriot Watt University** visited the Reserve Pond, briefly, at 19:00 to take water samples in connection with a research project to assess the health of the common frog (*Rana temporaria*) in the UK - focussing on different populations between SE England and Central/South Scotland.

The project is supervised by Dr. Frances Orton and associated researchers are Dr. Lavanya Vythalingam and Dominique Anderson.

Samples of water, sediment, spawn and tadpoles will be taken twice a year, between 2024 and 2027. Jim will report back on the outcome of the study in due course.

## 6. February Events.

**Sun. 25 Annual Nut Race 2.00 - 4.00pm.**



There was a good turnout of both children and adults for this year's Nut Race at Eskrigg Reserve. The weather was favourable and although the water level in the burn dropped during the afternoon, there was just enough flow to complete the heats and the final race.

On behalf of Lockerbie Wildlife Trust, the Reserve Manager, Jim Rae, would like to thank the following people:

- a. All who sponsored a nut and helped to raise the sum of £701 for the work of the Trust at Eskrigg Reserve.
- b. All those who attended on the day to help the nuts along the stream.
- c. Liz McDonnell for, once again, donating the cash prizes and cream eggs for the participants.
- d. Isobel Gibson and her staff at the Lockerbie Service Station for donating chocolate bunnies for all who helped on the day.
- e. Members of Lockerbie and District Rotary Club for their help in preparing the stream in advance.
- f. **Allan Devlin for taking the above photographs of the event.**

The prize winners, who sponsored the winning nuts, were as follows:

1st Prize £25 - Caroline Fraser; 2nd Prize £15 - Archie Dalgliesh; 3rd Prize £5 - Geoff Ruston.

## 7. Fungus of the month - Scarlet Elfcup (*Sarcoscypha austriaca*)



Scarlet Elfcups grow on the decaying branches of trees such as hazel and willow, in damp spots and beneath leaf litter on the woodland floor. They favour areas with high rainfall. They have a very short and thin stem, tapering toward the base and covered in tiny fine white hairs. The spores are white, ellipsoidal to cylindrical and have tiny oil droplets at either end.

The cap has microscopic tubes called asci that release the spores from the upper 'cup' of the fungus into the air - making a tiny puffing sound when they do so.

It is a tasty fungus, well worth the effort of cleaning and cooking. It must not be eaten raw. It is also a popular food source for rodents and slugs.

### **Mythology and symbolism**

In European folklore, it was said that wood elves drank morning dew from the cups.

Photographs by Jim Rae



## 8. Animal of the month - Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)



Song Thrushes are small songbirds, commonly found in parks and gardens, woodland and scrub. They are widespread throughout Europe and as far east as Siberia. Northern populations are migratory, heading to Africa, whereas our song thrushes tend to be residents.

The birds are brown above, with a white breast covered in dark brown, drop-shaped spots. They have an orange underwing which is visible during flight. They are smaller and a warmer brown than the mistle thrush, and lack the white eye-stripe and red flank patches of the redwing. Adults moult all their feathers between June and September.

Song Thrushes begin singing in early spring, sometimes as early as January. Their beautiful, loud song consists

of short phrases repeated three to five times in quick succession, particularly in early mornings, and being belted from prominent song posts such as the tops of small trees or bushes.

The breeding season starts in March. Song Thrushes build their cup-shaped nests low down in trees, shrubs or ivy, usually close to the trunk, although sheds and outbuildings are sometimes used. The nests are made of twigs, grass and moss with a smooth mud lining held together by saliva.

They lay clutches of two to five glossy blue eggs, with dark flecks, which hatch around two weeks later. The parents will feed the chicks for two weeks, after which the young birds can leave the nest but will still rely on the parents to feed them until they reach maturity. In this area, Song Thrushes may rear a second brood.



Song Thrushes prefer to eat earthworms but will eat all kinds of food, caterpillars, beetles and fruits, especially berries in the autumn. In dry weather, when the ground becomes too hard to get at the earthworms, Song Thrushes will eat snails instead. To get at the flesh inside, they take the shell and crack it open by banging it against a stone 'anvil'. This behaviour is unique to these birds.

### Threats and conservation

While the Song Thrush was once one of our most common birds, it is now unfortunately an amber-listed species of conservation concern. During the second half of the twentieth century, the population underwent a steep decline by over 50% and many British gardens lost their resident Song Thrush. This was most likely due to habitat loss. Hedgerows, woodland and pasture are all valuable habitats for these birds; however, these were increasingly being lost due to changes in agricultural practices and woodland management. More recently, there have been signs of a slight recovery. Incentives for farmers to improve hedgerow management and field margins may be helping.

Photographs by Jim Rae (JR) & Mike Pitts (MP)

**Total people count for February = 1,490**  
**Average number per day = 50**  
**Highest 109 on the day of the Nut Race**

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