

Lockerbie Wildlife Trust

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

Eskrigg Reserve

April 2024 News Bulletin



Scottish Charity No:
SC 005538

1. Eskrigg Pond on the morning of 27 April.



2. Reported wildlife sightings at the Reserve during April.

a. Birds:

Blackbird, Blackcap, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Collared Dove, Cormorant, Cuckoo, Dunnock, Fieldfare, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Jay, Lesser Redpoll, Little Grebe, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Mallard, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Red Kite, Redwing, Reed Bunting, Robin, Rook, Siskin, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Stock Dove, Stonechat, Swallow, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow, Willow Warbler, Woodpigeon, Wood Warbler, Wren.



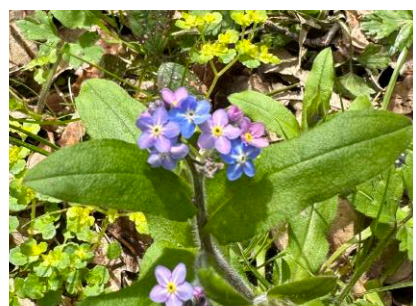
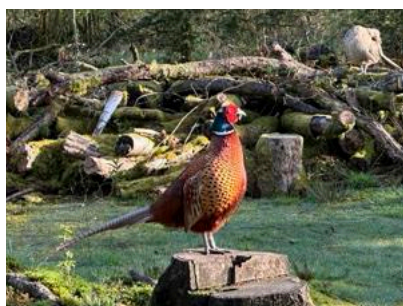
b. Mammals:

Hare, Pipistrelle Bat, Rabbit, Red Squirrel, Roe Deer, Stoat.



Photographs by Andrew K Murray (AM), Jim Rae (JR)

3. April 2024 Photo-gallery.



Row 1: Barren Strawberry, Bilberry, Dog Violet
Row 2: Garlic Mustard, False Morrel, Lesser Celandine
Row 3: Young Rabbit, Crab Apple Blossom, Red Squirrels
Row 4: Primrose, Cock Pheasant, Wood Forget-me-not
Row 5: Coltsfoot, Ramsons or Wild Garlic, Dandelion

Photographs by Jim Rae



Can you identify
this plant?
Answer on p6.

4. Construction and Maintenance Work during April.

Fri. 05 **Robert Gray, Gordon Reid** and **Sam Pattinson** collected gravel with the quad bike and trailer and laid it on the recently boarded section of the reserve path. They then rolled the gravel. Meanwhile **Sybille Spägele** and **Jim Rae** weeded the steps up to the Kingfisher Hide and topped up the steps with fresh gravel.



Sun. 07 After the strong winds on the 6th April, **Jim** had to clear a fallen willow and the downy birch that the willow had partially knocked over next to the Red Squirrel Hide.



In doing so he found a duck's nest with eight eggs in it, and he was worried that the female duck had abandoned the nest due to the tree felling. However, when he checked the Red Squirrel Hide the following morning, the duck had returned to her nest.



Fri. 12 **Norah Muirhead, Brian Mauson** and **Robert Gray** helped **Jim Rae** to clear part of the ditch alongside the Reserve path and then removed self-seeded trees from the side of the path down the Southern Loop.



Tue. 16 **Jim** brushed down the outside walls of the Eskrigg Centre and then treated the walls with Algon to kill off the algae.

Wed. 17 **Jim** brushed down the wall of the compost toilet and the surrounding fence and then treated them with Algon. He then did the same with the Red Squirrel Hide and Shelter.



Fri. 19 **Brian, Robert** and **Gordon** helped **Jim** fill in the potholes along the Eskrigg Farm Road.

Meanwhile, **Norah Muirhead** removed more self-seeded trees from alongside the path round the Southern Loop.



Photographs by Jim Rae

Sun. 21 Lockerbie Wildlife Trust had its first of the planned monthly **Volunteer Maintenance Days**. The Reserve Manager, **Jim Rae** would like to thank **Gordon Reid, David Hughes and Zack Nicholson** for coming along and helping to treat the outside of the Centre, Compost Toilet and Red Squirrel Hide and their railings with wood preservative.

Mon. 22, Tue. 23 & Wed. 24 Jim brushed down and treated the following structures with wood preservative: the windows, porch and ramp of the Centre, the generator box, the interior and base of the Red Squirrel Hide and ramp up to it, the door and front wall of the Kingfisher Hide and the outside walls of the Shelter.

Fri. 26 Gordon, Norah and Robert worked with **Jim** to clear self-seeded trees from the bank of the ditch at the side of the Reserve path so that the tree roots did not grow to block the ditch and the branches did not impede walkers on the path.



5. April Events.

Tue. 2/Wed. 3 Moth Trapping

Three moth traps were put out on the Tuesday evening and examined the next morning.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Trap 1	Trap 2	Trap 3	Centre
Clouded Drab	<i>Orthosia incerta</i>	3	4	2	-
Common Quaker	<i>Orthosia cerasi</i>	7	-	2	-
Early Grey	<i>Xylocampa areola</i>	3	-	2	-
Early Tooth-striped	<i>Trichopteryx carpinata</i>	1	6	2	-
Engrailed	<i>Ectropis crepuscularia</i>	-	1	-	-
Hebrew Character	<i>Orthosia gothica</i>	15	3	4	-
Narrow-winged Pug*	<i>Eupithecia nanata</i>	-	-	-	1
Pale Brindled Beauty*	<i>Phigalia pilosaria</i>	1	-	-	-
Pine Beauty	<i>Panolis flammea</i>	-	1	-	-
Red Chestnut*	<i>Cerastis rubricosa</i>	6	-	2	-
Small Quaker	<i>Orthosia cruda</i>	4	1	-	-
Tawny Pinion*	<i>Lithophane semibrunnea.</i>	1	-	-	-
Twin-spotted Quaker	<i>Anorthoa munda</i>	4	1	3	-

*New Species for Eskrigg Reserve



Red Chestnut



Narrow-winged Pug



Pale Brindled Beauty



Tawny Pinion

Photographs by Jim Rae

6. Plant of the month: Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*)



In spring, the woodland is awash with a sea of blue when this species starts blooming. They are one of the nation's best-loved flowers. The carpet of intense blue under the unfurling tree canopy is one of our greatest woodland spectacles. Bluebells are unmistakable bell-shaped perennial herbs. They actually spend the majority of their time underground as bulbs, emerging, often in droves, to flower from mid-April to late May. This early flowering allows them to make the most of the sunlight that is still able to make it to the forest floor habitat, before the canopy becomes too thick.

The leaves are narrow, around 10mm to 15mm wide and 45cm long. They are strap-shaped, smooth and hairless, with a pointed tip.

The flowers are usually deep violet-blue in colour and narrow, tubular-bell shaped, with tips that curl back. These sweet-smelling flowers nod or droop to one side of the flowering stem (known as an inflorescence) and have creamy white-coloured pollen inside. Some bluebell flowers can be white. Up to 20 flowers can grow on one inflorescence.

Native bluebells are protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

THEY MUST NOT BE CONFUSED WITH: The Spanish bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*), which is very similar in appearance to the native bluebell. The Spanish bluebell was introduced into the UK by the Victorians as a garden plant, but escaped into the wild.

The Spanish bluebells grow upright, have broad leaves - about 3cm wide and have pale blue (often white or pink), conical-bell flowers with spreading and open tips, all around the stem, not drooping to one side like the native bluebell. They have no scent and their pollen is coloured blue or pale green.

OR: The Hybrid bluebell (*Hyacinthoides x massartiana*) which is a mix of the British and Spanish bluebell. It is often very similar in appearance to our native bluebell, but might threaten its existence by out-competing it and diluting the gene pool.



Does it matter that we have both in the wild?

The UK's woodlands are home to almost 50% of the world's population of the bluebell. But this much-loved plant is under threat. The Spanish bluebell is more vigorous than our native bluebell, so can outcompete it for resources like light and space. It can hybridise with our native bluebell, too, producing fertile plants that show a whole range of mixed features from both species. Over time, this hybridisation changes the genetic makeup of our native species, diluting its characteristics, weakening it and potentially evolving it into something else.

7. Animal of the month: Bank Vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*)

This small rodent leads a short but active life in the woods. It has a shaggy fur coat which is chestnut-brown on the upper parts and cream-coloured underneath, a blunt nose, small eyes, small ears which are almost hidden in fur, short legs and a tail about half the length of its head and body.

The bank vole lives in banks and hedgerows, scrubland, deciduous woodland and mature coniferous woodland that has a rich understory. It usually makes its home where there is thick cover, of brambles or bracken for example, but will occasionally venture on to more open ground if the vegetation is sufficiently tall to give it cover. It also lives along river banks and is an excellent swimmer.



The bank vole is a lively creature, busy day and night, with short bursts of foraging that are interspersed with periods of rest or sleep. It is an agile climber but spends most of its time rushing about on the ground.

It feeds mainly on plant material, such as leaves, brambles, seeds, nuts, berries, roots and the grains of wheat and barley. It also eats fungi and a small quantity of snails, worms, insects and larvae. In winter it may also climb a tree that has soft bark and sit in a fork to gnaw on the bark lining. The droppings are cylindrical, usually with rounded ends. Their colour varies with the diet; in summer they are usually greenish but in winter they are brown to black.

The bank vole chatters and squeaks, but its sense of smell is probably a more important form of communication. Drops of urine are released at regular intervals to mark its home range. The odour of faeces, and body smells, can convey an enormous amount of information and bank voles can even distinguish between their own body odour and that of others.

The bank vole's home range is criss-crossed by a network of surface runs and underground tunnels, that centre on a nest constructed at a depth of 2-10cm from leaves, moss and feathers. Surplus food is sometimes stored in these underground tunnels.

The breeding season starts in April and continues until late October. If food, such as acorns, is in plentiful supply, breeding may continue through winter. There are three to five young to a litter and the female may produce three or four litters in a season. The female is ready to mate again immediately after the birth of her young. At birth the young weigh only 2g. They are born blind, naked and helpless for the first few days. The grey-brown juvenile coat appears after four to ten days, and the first moult to longer denser fur occurs between four and six weeks later. Their eyes open at around twelve days old. They are weaned after about 25 days. Females reach sexual maturity after six weeks and males after eight. Bank voles can live for around two years, but few reach such an age, with many falling victim to predators, including birds of prey such as the tawny owl, barn owl and kestrel that hunt in woodland and carnivores such as the weasel, stoat and fox.

Animals born early in the breeding season mature quickly and breed in the same year. These are likely to be sufficiently large and strong to survive the rigours of winter and will breed again next season. However, those animals born late in the season grow slowly and do not reproduce until after their first winter, if they manage to survive at all. The bank vole population varies throughout the year and from year to year, often in three to four-year cycles.

Photograph by Jim Rae

Total people count for April = 1,451 Average number per day = 48

Plant identity on p2 - The seed head of the Coltsfoot

Jim Rae (Eskrigg Reserve Manager)

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