

Welcome signs of spring?



The delicate white blooms of wood anemone are one of the first welcome signs of spring.

Welcome to our thirty eighth edition of Wagtail, the newsletter and events calendar for Dams to Darnley Country Park.

Inside you will find:

- **Winter events look back**
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The next edition of Wagtail will be out in summer 2018.



Bird boxes in the snow.

Snow joke

OUR WINTER EVENTS began with our fungi walk led by John Parker from Glasgow City Council's Countryside Ranger Service. John's expert knowledge made it a fascinating walk, especially when his keen eye spotted a red-belted bracket fungus. We were excited to discover that this was a first recording of this species in the Glasgow area.

Our annual Christmas wreath making 'berries, boughs and bows' event was a great success as usual, with some fabulous and colourful creations on show.

The New Year saw our first event of 2018. We helped people make their own nest

boxes as part of the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. Sadly, just before we began, the snow came down heavily so we had very cold toes by the end.

Into February and the annual walk looking at our winter birds took place on an almost spring-like day. We saw a pair of ravens sky-dancing and a couple of great crested grebes beginning their courtship display. We also spotted a few scaup in a group of over 100 tufted ducks, as well as a yellow-legged gull on Waulkmill Glen Reservoir. Our total count for the walk was 33 different species. A great day birding.

Project insight for students

THE CLOSURE OF AURS Road at the end of last year for investigation works gave students from Woodfarm High School the opportunity to don high visibility vests in order to find out more about what was happening on site. Third year geography pupils met engineers from East Renfrewshire Council contractors BAM Ritchies and Mott MacDonald to discover how different professions are working together to deliver new Glasgow City Region City Deal infrastructure projects next to Balgray Reservoir. Students also gained a practical insight into the kind of work and skills involved in these careers.

The site visit gave pupils an understanding of what was involved in the ground investigation works taking place along the reservoir dam embankment, as part of preparations for the proposed realignment of



Woodfarm High School students on site.

Aurs Road, bridge replacement and new boardwalk.

The students and their teachers then joined landscape architects from ERZ on an interactive walk to discuss ideas around geography, place, ecology, art and engineering and how they might influence the functionality and design of the boardwalk.

The visit was arranged as part of the Council's Community Benefits programme, whereby appointed contractors and consultants commit to sharing their skills and knowledge and support training and employment.

Spotlight

on park wildlife

Joe and Alyson's wildlife witter



Snowdrops.

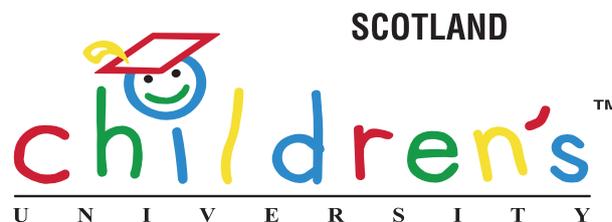
THIS WINTER SEEMS TO have been colder and drier than the last few. There were fewer sightings of one of our regular winter visitors, the whooper swan, with only a couple being spotted. On the plus side though, scaup were regularly seen amongst large flocks of tufted ducks and pochards. Scaup are rare inland visitors in winter, so it was a bonus to see

them hang around for a few weeks. Another none too common bird that was often seen over the winter was a yellow legged gull. This herring gull sized bird is normally found further south and spends summers around the Mediterranean, but occasionally is seen in more northern latitudes. Its yellow legs distinguish it from the similar looking herring gull, which has pink legs.

In November we were excited to find a red-belted bracket fungus (*Fomitopsis pinicola*). It was spotted by John Parker from Glasgow City Council's Countryside Ranger Service in Waulkmill Glen wood. It is classed as rare in the UK and this is the first record of it in the Glasgow area. We will keep our eyes peeled for more of them.

At the time of writing the onset of spring has been put on pause by the snow. But hopefully the first signs of spring that we spotted in mid-February will soon reappear. At that time many birds were already singing and displaying, herons (one of the first breeding species) had started nest building and snowdrops were also in bloom.

Destination Dams to Darnley



The country park is now a Children's University Learning Destination.

WE ARE DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THAT DAMS TO Darnley Country Park has become a Learning Destination with the Children's University Scotland. The Children's University is a charity that celebrates learning outside of school hours by encouraging exciting educational activities at home and in local communities.

Trying new things and ways to learn, developing practical and personal skills and building confidence are all part of the learning journey. They are also a great way to encourage learning as a family. Joining the Children's University is done through school, and on becoming a member each child receives a Passport for Learning. The passport is used to record all achievements gained out with the school environment. This way of learning has great benefits for those who may be struggling with, or who find, a more formal learning environment overwhelming at times.

Children between 5 and 14 years of age can take part by getting creative, getting active and getting outdoors to

collect credits for their passport, which could be a stamp or a sticker. Many, maybe even all, of the activities you can take part in with the Countryside Ranger Service in Dams to Darnley Country Park would result in gaining credits to put in your passport. We have stickers ready and waiting to be stuck pride of place in your passports! When enough credits have been collected, each passport holder gets to take part in a graduation ceremony to celebrate their achievement.

Collecting stickers and stamps may also be the small incentive needed to encourage more and more kids to get out and about visiting many of the Learning Destinations the Children's University already has registered. Examples of destinations include castles, beaches, nature reserves and now Dams to Darnley Country Park.

For more information about broadening horizons and raising aspirations you can visit

www.childrensuniversityscotland.com

Artistic ideas for the boardwalk

AS MENTIONED IN THE LAST EDITION OF WAGTAIL, over the last couple of months local residents and students have been getting the opportunity to work with a number of artists to develop ideas for distinct design elements of the proposed Balgray boardwalk.

In late January two workshops were held at Rouken Glen Pavilion, Giffnock. The first workshop focused upon poetry and was led by Ken Cockburn of Studio Alec Finlay. The second session, led by Yvonne Elliot-Kelligan of Bespoke Atelier, involved a print workshop and gave everyone a good opportunity to get their hands dirty.

The two workshops were repeated in early February, this time at St Luke's High School in Barrhead. St Luke's pupils were joined by students from Barrhead High, Carlibar Primary and Isobel Mair schools.

There will be a public exhibition giving everyone the



Printing workshop.

opportunity to take a look at the results of the workshops and how they have contributed to design ideas for the boardwalk. The exhibition opens between 3-7pm on 14 March, and can be found in the foyer of Barrhead Foundry. ERZ will be on hand to take you through the draft plans and answer any queries. The exhibition will remain in place at the Foundry until 18 March, so you can drop in at any time. The exhibition will also be in place at the Avenue Shopping Centre, Newton Mearns, on 19 March.

Spotlight on the red-belted bracket fungus

Fantastical fungal findings:

- **The first Glasgow recording of a red-belted bracket fungus has taken place in Dams to Darnley Country Park.**
- **Extracts from the red-belted bracket fungus have been studied for its ability to inhibit the HIV replication cycle.**
- **One fun fact about hoof fungi (which are easily confused with red-belted bracket fungus) is that they are also called tinder polypores, referring to their use in ancient times for lighting fires and for carrying burning embers from hearth to hearth.**



Red belted bracket fungus.

AS MENTIONED EARLIER, ON OUR FUNGI WALK BACK in November John Parker's eagle eye spotted a red-belted bracket fungus growing out of a fallen birch tree in the Local Nature Reserve section of the country park.

The scientific name for this red-belted polypore (a fungus that discharges spores through pores) is *Fomitopsis pinicola*. Fomitopsis means similar in appearance to Fomes, the genus that includes hoof fungi, another common fungus that is found in the country park and easily confused with red-belted bracket fungus. As their name might suggest, this type of fungus look like a horse's hoof.

The species name 'pinicola' means living on pine trees, which this mushroom often does. But our specimen was found on a birch tree. Studies have shown that red-belted bracket fungus are not limited to pine trees and have in fact been found growing on at least 100 different species of tree hosts.

The red-belted bracket fungus has been used for many different ailments through the ages, including being applied to wounds in a paste form. It has also been used to treat intermittent fevers, chronic diarrhoea, neuralgia, nervous headaches, excessive urination, jaundice, tuberculosis fevers and more recently anti-obesity studies in mice!

Dams to Darnley Country Park Events calendar

- All events are FREE.
- Booking is required for some events.
- All children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Wet 'n' wild

Sunday 25 March, 1-3pm

Description: Discover the country park's wetlands on this family pond dip. See what wildlife lurks beneath the water of our ponds.

Location: Meet at the World Buffet restaurant car park, Corselet Road, Darnley G53 7RN.



Bedtime bugs

Thursday 5 April, 8-9.30pm

Description: Ever wondered what might go bump in the night or scurry while you sleep? Come and explore the country park's woodland and wetland after dark to see what we can find lurking under logs or lying in wait among the leaves....and Halloween isn't for months!

Location: Meet at the World Buffet restaurant car park, Corselet Road, Darnley G53 7RN.



One egg or two?

Tuesday 10 April, 10am-12noon

Description: How many eggs will you decorate on our Easter craft event? Can you find the hidden eggs on our treasure hunt? Come along and join in the family fun with the countryside rangers.

Location: Meet at Patterton overflow car park, opposite side of the road from Patterton Railway Station, Newton Mearns G77 6NR.



Food for free

Saturday 21 April, 10am-1pm

Description: Ever wondered what there is in the woods to pick up and enjoy? Join us to see what we can find to eat for free in the country park.

Location: Meet at the World Buffet restaurant car park, Corselet Road, Darnley G53 7RN.



A dawn delight

Saturday 12 May, 5-7am

Description: Join the countryside rangers as we enjoy an early walk to soak up the fabulous sounds of the birds and their dawn chorus. We'll be on the lookout for a few other early risers as well.

Location: Meet at the World Buffet restaurant car park, Corselet Road, Darnley G53 7RN.



'Treasure' hunt

Saturday 19 May, 12.30-2.30pm

Description: Come and try a 'treasure' hunt round our orienteering course with a twist. Can you find all the clues and piece together the puzzle? Come along with your sense of adventure to find out. No experience necessary. This is a drop-in event so you do not need to book. The last group will set off at 2.30pm.

Location: Meet at the World Buffet restaurant car park, Corselet Road, Darnley G53 7RN.



KEY CHART



Booking required



No booking required



Wear suitable clothing



Bring a torch



Bring binoculars

Join our mailing list or contact the countryside rangers

The Dams to Darnley countryside rangers are planning a series of events throughout the year. If you would like to be sent information on upcoming events and all the latest news join our mailing list.

Name _____

Email Address _____

Address _____

Telephone No _____

To join our mailing list post or email your details to the address below.

This information will be treated as confidential and used only for the purpose stated. If you do not wish your details to be held on computer tick this box

Email: d2d@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Tel: 0141 577 4053/54

Web: www.damstodarnley.org



Post: Dams to Darnley Country Park, East Renfrewshire Council, Environment Department, Thornliebank Depot, 190 Carnwadric Road, Thornliebank, East Renfrewshire G46 8HR.