

A winter's trail



Hawthorn berries add a splash of country park colour in winter.

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

Inside you will find:

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The next edition of Wagtail will be out in spring 2014.

Autumn adventures

WE SCHEDULED OUR 'competitive canine' assault course for one of the hottest days of the year. Despite some of the dogs having to withdraw because of the heat a fun day was still had by all.

This year there was an unusually high abundance of berries and nuts so it was perfect for our 'food for free' event. We found lots to eat on our walk, but the brambles were particularly numerous and delicious.

After some last minute changes to our 'two hills hike' route from Neilston Pad due to cattle in fields we finally managed to find our way back to our starting point at Cowan Park and, we are glad to report, everyone arrived safely.

As usual our autumn 'bat and moth night' proved

very popular and we were again lucky with a perfect night for seeing lots of bats. Sadly the moths failed to make an appearance at our new moth trap.

During the autumn school break we had our 'country park crafting' event, as part of which the children produced a fantastic painted mural of Dams to Darnley. Finally on a very wet day in October we had our 'mushroom madness' walk and discovered lots of interesting fungi along the way.



Walkers on the 'two hills hike' on top of the Craigie.

Power to the people!



Country park volunteers in action.

THE COUNTRY PARK has a dedicated band of volunteers who have met every fortnight for the last few years, come rain, hail and even sometimes shine! The group get involved in a whole range of practical conservation activities throughout the country park.

As mentioned on the next page one of the ongoing projects that the group have been working on involves creating a new pond at the top of Corselet Road. The group have even been instrumental in getting a

grant to help with the cost of the project. In September the project secured a CSV Action Earth Local Nature Reserve Award of £500. CSV Action Earth is supported by Scottish Natural Heritage and aims to empower people to make a positive difference to their local environment through volunteering. The funding will help with the cost of a pond liner, wildflower seeds and trees, all of which will help to establish a brand new wetland habitat.

Spotlight on park wildlife

Eilidh & Joe's wildlife witter



Shaggy ink cap.

THE WONDERFUL SUMMER has led into a spectacular show of autumn colour. Being a countryside ranger it has been great to see these changes. Leaves have small amounts of yellow and orange colours in them which are only seen as the green chlorophyll disappears over winter. The cool but sunny start to autumn meant that glucose got trapped

within the leaves. Then sunlight turned this glucose into the fantastic reds which have characterised this autumn.

The more recent wet weather has been great for fungi. On our 'mushroom madness' event we found a great variety including: ink cap; puff ball; coral spot; amethyst deceiver; porcelain; turkey tail;

jellybaby and wood hedgehog. Wood hedgehog (*Hydnum repandum*) is very common and easily recognisable by its spines which project beneath the cap. It is also one of the top five mushrooms that people collect for their pot.

The Barrhead dams are great for waterfowl and this autumn has been no exception. Three gadwall

were sighted in a flock of mallards on Balgray Reservoir. You can separate them by their dark rear and slightly smaller size. Also on the reservoir were great crested grebe, scaup, little grebe, teal and wigeon. A flock of around 60 lapwing also flew overhead. We are now looking forward to some of our winter migrants arriving.

A year in the countryside ranger service

AS WELL AS RUNNING the country park's events programme the countryside rangers are busy in other areas. We are heavily involved in environmental education with local schools. So far in 2013 we have seen over 1,300 school pupils. Most pupils visited Dams to Darnley, but we also worked within a number of schools across East Renfrewshire.

In between the events, the schools, the volunteer group and our regular health walks we also managed to find time to carry out some surveys. In the spring it was for butterflies, whilst the dry summer allowed us to do a water vole survey which showed that we do have these fantastic characters in the country park.

Eilidh has now been trained in using a chain saw (stay well clear) which will allow us to do some small

scale woodland management. We have also been trying to learn more about some of the animals and plants found in the country park so we have been on a course to learn about earthworms and we have been trying (and failing) to teach ourselves fern identification.

One of the largest projects we have worked on with our volunteers will hopefully be finished over the winter.

For the past few months we

have been creating a large pond at the top of Corselet Road near the wood. This has been heavy, hard work and the volunteers have done a great job. Pupils from Barrhead High School got very muddy when they also helped out. When the pond is finished we will landscape the area around it and use it for schools and other groups.

Our 2014 diary is already filling up.



Small tortoiseshell butterfly.



REPORT ANY PROBLEMS

Report any antisocial crimes in progress to the police on **101**

Other antisocial problems such as fly-tipping or graffiti should be reported to the countryside ranger service on **0141 577 4053/54**

Outwith office hours call 'Clean Glasgow' on **0800 027 7027** or East Renfrewshire 'Ring and Report' on **0800 013 0076**

Take the first steps to improve your health

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY REPORTS PUBLISHED IN recent months extolling the virtues of walking, yet recent figures suggest that in England only 6% of men and 4% of woman do enough physical activity to benefit their health. It is believed that the figures are comparable in Scotland. Some reports suggest that being inactive increases the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes by 25–30% and shortens lifespan by three to five years. Physical activity helps maintain a healthy weight, improves cholesterol levels, reduces blood pressure, builds healthy muscles and bones, improves balance and reduces the risk of falls. It can also counteract stress and anxiety.

The most accessible and cheapest form of physical exercise is walking. You do not need expensive equipment and it can be done simply by opening your front door and stepping outside. A daily walk of between 20-25 minutes at a moderate to fast pace is all that is required.

If you do not fancy walking on your own there are lots of walking groups throughout the local area. These walks are suitable for all ages and levels and are usually only two to four miles in length on good paths (and in good company). Darnley have a health walk every Wednesday morning from 10am-12noon. We meet at the World Buffet restaurant car park, Corselet Road,



There is a weekly health walk within the country park.

Darnley. For more information on this or other walks in the area contact the countryside rangers on 0141 577 4053/54 or email d2d@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk. So don't just sit there, start today!

Spotlight on snowdrops

Snowdrop facts

- Snowdrops are sometimes placed in the lily family (*Liliaceae*) but can also be classified along with daffodils and snowflakes in their own *Amaryllidaceae* family.
- The Latin for snowdrop, *Galanthus*, comes from the Greek words *gála* (milk) and *ánthos* (flower).
- Snowdrops are a small genus of about 20 species.



Snowdrop.

EVERYBODY RECOGNISES THE BEAUTIFUL SNOWDROP (*Galanthus nivalis*). Their hardened leaf tips allow them to push their way through frosty ground when you think it is not possible for anything to grow. An old folk name for the snowdrop is snow piercer. The solitary nodding flower heads droop with white petals. They appear to have two rings of three petals, but the outer ring is actually made up of sepals. The inner ring's shorter notched petals have a green streak on the inside.

You are most likely to see patches of snowdrops in woodlands and along hedgerows. Although they are

commonly thought of as a native British flower it is likely that they were introduced from central Europe in the 16th century. They were widely planted and are now naturalised in the wild.

As they flower in the winter there are not many pollinating insects around so instead snowdrops spread largely by bulb division.

We are lucky to have them in the country park as they were probably planted in the 18th century when Darnley House was standing just to the north of Waulkmill Glen woodland.

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.

A winter's trail

Saturday 11 January, 11am – 1pm

Description: Walk off your winter blues with the countryside rangers on this easy walk around the reservoirs. We will be on the lookout for some of the country park's regular winter visiting birds and perhaps even a rarity or two, so bring some binoculars if you have them.

Location: Meet at the Balgray Reservoir car park, Balgraystone Road, off Springfield Road, Barrhead.



Animal b&b

Sunday 23 February, 11am – 1pm

Description: Join the countryside rangers as we look at the different shelters that birds, bats and beasties use as a home and maybe make a few to take away.

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



Out of this world

Friday 7 March, 6.30 – 8.30pm

Description: Join the countryside rangers and experts from Glasgow University as we sort out the stars from the satellites. Learn a little about the galaxy and what makes up our sky at night. We have always been lucky in arranging a clear night sky for our stargazing events, so fingers crossed for this year!

Location: Meet at the Balgray Reservoir car park, Balgraystone Road, off Springfield Road, Barrhead.



Citizen scientists

Saturday 22 March, 1 – 4pm

Description: During National Science and Engineering Week join in with the countryside rangers as they undertake a kick survey in the Brock Burn as part of the Clyde Riverfly Monitoring Partnership (CRIMP), a citizen science project organised by the Clyde River Foundation. We will then have a closer look at our catch under the microscope. Wear your wellies!

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



KEY CHART



Booking required



Wear suitable clothing



Bring binoculars if you have them



Bring a torch

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.