

Spring forward



Bluebells in Darnley Mill woodland.

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

Inside you will find:

- **Winter events look back**
- **A sticky surprise**
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The next edition of Wagtail will be out in summer 2014.

In with the new (year)

THE BIGGEST FRIGHT at Halloween was the weather; it was pouring! We still managed to play a couple of games under our gazebo before going on a squelchy, spooky story walk.

We had a wonderful day tree planting in November for National Tree Week. In a few hours we managed to plant 300 trees, creating a wildlife corridor and screening next to the railway line fence at Balgray Reservoir.

The last event of 2013 was 'winter willow weaving'. We made beautiful wreaths and stars and generally got into the Christmas spirit.

To kick off the new year 26 people joined us for a walk around the reservoirs. We shook off our winter



Christmas wreath making.

blues whilst on the lookout for birds. We spotted a wintering goosander, as well as lots of residents including two dippers.

The countryside ranger service has a range of events planned for 2014 including archery, worm charming and archaeology. A full list of events can be found at www.damstodarnley.org

A sticky surprise

IN JANUARY, WHILE AT Busby Primary School looking for mini-beasts with primary one pupils, we made a horrific discovery! We found lots of glistening, sticky, dark brown New Zealand flatworms.

These flatworms are thought to have been introduced to Scotland in 1965 in soil brought to botanic gardens and nurseries. People purchasing plants and trees from nurseries then unwittingly took the flatworms home in soil. They are now found across mainland Scotland and some islands, mainly in urban gardens where they disperse locally. Flatworms have not yet been recorded in natural environments, so their wider impact is unknown.

Flatworms feed almost exclusively on earthworms.



A flatworm.

The reduced number of earthworms has serious negative impacts on ecology. Earthworms are a food source for many animals. They mix the soil and speed up the decay of organic material which improves soil nutrients. The holes that earthworms create also improve drainage.

There is one case of a farmer discovering flatworms in a field and within a matter of years no earthworms could be found. The field then began to flood, yet there had been no record of flooding during the three previous generations.

Spotlight on park wildlife

Eilidh & Joe's wildlife witter

THIS WINTER HAS BEEN unusually mild and wet so the influx of winter birds escaping from the north has been slightly disappointing.

Normally we would have large flocks of fieldfares and redwings, but numbers have been low this year.

It has been a similar story with whooper swans which have only occasionally been sighted.

It has not all been

disappointing though. A group of 10 cormorants were spotted on Waulkmill Glen Reservoir and numbers of great crested grebes were still high with an average of 14 or 15 individuals being seen at any one time. Goosander numbers were also encouraging and 20-30 birds could usually be seen in large groups.

The resident dippers at



Grey heron.

the waterfall beside Ryat Linn Reservoir have been very visible as have our kingfishers. On one of our health walks we spotted a kingfisher on five different occasions which was a real highlight. We even had a report of a water rail being spotted. This is an extremely shy bird and is rarely seen.

During the winter a bat was also seen flying during the daytime near Ryat Linn

Reservoir. It is very unusual to see bats this early and during the day. Hopefully it hadn't been disturbed.

The first signs of spring are now showing. Our snowdrops made an appearance in early February and our resident grey heron have begun nest building. These birds are one of the first to nest. Let's hope spring occurs earlier than it did last year!

Update on Scottish Water work



Work underway at Waulkmill Glen Reservoir sluice and regulating house.

ONGOING AND FUTURE Scottish Water works at Waulkmill Glen and Ryat Linn reservoirs are the result of an inspection carried out by an All Reservoir Panel Engineer. All dam owners are required by law to have such inspections carried out every 10 years where the volume of water is greater than 25,000 cubic meters.

Works underway at Waulkmill Glen Reservoir involve clearing undergrowth from around the sluice house and amongst the trees on

the dam face and repairs to the draw-off tower roof to make it watertight. Once Scottish Water examined the reservoir tower it became apparent that it required much more extensive work than first envisaged. The tower is a category A listed historic structure; part of the wider listing associated with Waulkmill Glen Reservoir. Scottish Water is engaging with Historic Scotland and East Renfrewshire Council on the best way for the project to proceed.

Before commencing the initial clearance Scottish Water undertook a bird and bat survey and an additional survey will be carried out before any further work.

Scottish Water is also planning future works at Ryat Linn Reservoir. This will require the complete draining of the reservoir in order to carry out a CCTV survey of the only pipe which drains it. Scottish Water is working with the Clyde River Foundation and Dams to Darnley Angling Club to arrange to catch the reservoir's fish and transfer them temporarily. The fish will be transferred back to Ryat Linn Reservoir once the work is complete and it has re-filled to a suitable level.

Scottish Water is currently liaising with country park staff to ensure that the works are carried out at the best time of year to avoid potential disturbance to nesting birds.



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**

From zero to hero!

ARE YOUR NEW YEAR FITNESS RESOLUTIONS FALLING by the way side? Looking for a bit of motivation? Then join Dams to Darnley jogging group. We are currently in the process of organising a coach to lead a weekly jogging group on a Wednesday evening, hopefully starting in April.

An initial free 10 week programme will be aimed at people who do not currently jog and will help them build up to being able to do a 5K and beyond. If people want to continue on to the next level we can look at extending the programme with the aim of completing a 10K.

Jogging is a cheap and easily accessible way of improving your health. Jogging regularly will improve the health of your heart and lungs. It can also help you lose a few pounds; especially if done alongside a healthy diet. Jogging has also been shown to combat depression and relieve stress. It can give you a break from the daily routine and a little time for reflection. The beautiful surroundings of the country park are sure to inspire anyone.

If you are interested in joining the group please contact the countryside ranger service, our details are on the back page.



Weekly jogging on Wednesday evenings within the country park.

Spotlight on freshwater invertebrates

Freshwater invertebrate facts

- **There are 16 species of leech in the UK but only one can suck on human blood.**
- **There are nearly 200 species of caddisfly in Britain.**
- **The ferocious great diving beetle can reach 35mm in length and will attack anything that moves including frogs and fish.**



Water scorpion.

THIS YEAR WE RAN AN EVENT AS PART OF NATIONAL Science and Engineering Week. The event involved the countryside rangers and the public taking part in a kick survey in the Brock Burn as part of the Clyde Riverfly Monitoring Partnership (CRIMP).

The countryside rangers try to do a CRIMP survey once a month at three country park locations. These surveys are a vital tool in monitoring the riverfly population of the Brock and Aurs burns and, as a consequence, the health of the rivers. A good population of riverflies usually signifies a healthy river.

During these surveys we are on the lookout for the larvae of invertebrates such as stoneflies, mayflies and

caddisflies, as well as a few others. In addition we count the number of freshwater shrimps found. If the number of these larvae suddenly drop then it could indicate pollution further up stream and it would be reported to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) for further investigation.

Our rivers and ponds are also home to dragonfly and damselfly nymphs, beetles, snails, leeches, water boatmen, water scorpions and many other invertebrates. All these beasts attract frogs, toads, newts and fish which are themselves eaten by things such as herons and otters. So beasts do matter! Without them our rivers and the country park would have far less biodiversity.

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.

Re: cycle

Sunday 6 April, 11am – 1pm

Description: Do you have pedal power? Hop on your bike for this cycle tour of Dams to Darnley led by the countryside rangers.

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



An eggremely eggciting event

Tuesday 15 April, 2 – 4pm

Description: Come along to Cowan Park for some Easter family fun and games where we will be decorating eggs and playing a few games as well.

Location: Children's play park, Cowan Park, Barrhead.



Dawn chorus

Sunday 27 April, 5 – 7am

Description: Join the countryside rangers on this dawn chorus sunrise walk. We will also be on the lookout for other early risers.

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



Spring has spawned

Saturday 10 May, 1.30 – 3.30pm

Description: Did you know that one frog can lay 2,000 eggs? Come along and find out how we survey such explosive breeders in the country park.

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



Food for free part II: the early year

Sunday 18 May, 10am – 12.30pm

Description: Following our autumnal forage join the countryside rangers as we see what is available for our plates in spring.

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



The big dip

Saturday 31 May, 1.30 – 3.30pm

Description: Come and see what beasties and bugs we can catch in some of our ponds and discover why ponds are so important for all sorts of wildlife on this family event.

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



Butterflies are brilliant

Sunday 15 June, 11am – 1pm

Description: Join the countryside rangers as we go in search of our beautiful butterflies. We will also learn about the different species that can be found in the country park.

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 your bike

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.