

## Autumn highlights



Autumn leaves.

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

Inside you will find:

- **Summer events look back**
- **Which way?**
- **Wildlife witter**
- **CRIMP!**
- **Two hills hike**
- **Spotlight on winter thrushes**
- **Autumn events calendar**

The next edition of Wagtail will be out in winter 2013.

### Summer shenanigans

AFTER A LONG COLD spring, a superb summer arrived and we certainly enjoyed it. We went 'dip-a-dee-doo-dah' for pond dipping and one boy caught the largest diving beetle any of us had ever seen.

Our angling event was a wash out. Can you believe the weather was too good? The water was flat and the sun was beaming down, which meant the fish were not biting. One very philosophical nine year old pointed out this is why it is called fishing and not catching.

We caught lots of creepy crawlies and bumblebees on our bug hunt and the meadows were teeming with ringlets and meadow browns on 'the big butterfly count'. We also saw a red admiral and a few whites.

Mark Roberts from

Glasgow Life gave us lots of incredible information about Darnley Mill and Waulkmill Glen on our historic walk. Did you know Darnley had a castle?

Everyone managed to find their way 'from pillar to post' in order to complete the extended country park orienteering course. You can download the map and control sheet from the website or contact the countryside ranger service.

Finally, fantastic dens were built during our 'dragon's den' event. We even camped out in them for lunch!



Little bug hunters.

### Which way?

IF YOU TAKE A WALK beside Balgray Reservoir look out for five new wooden waymarker posts every 500m. The decision to install the posts relates to an incident that took place several winters ago.

On Boxing Day 2009 a country park visitor got into great difficulty after falling through ice whilst trying to rescue her dogs.

Luckily a passing walker was able to assist by pulling her out. The gentleman was presented with a Brave@Heart award by the Scottish First Minister in 2011 in recognition of his heroism.

One of the main issues faced once back on land was alerting the emergency services as to the exact location of the incident because of limited signage.

Since 2009 entrance signage at Balgray Reservoir path has been erected,



Scottish Water volunteers.

but it is hoped that the waymarkers will also help new country park visitors orientate themselves if required.

The posts have an additional value. A return journey from either end of the Balgray Reservoir path, passing all five posts, clocks up 4km. So country park visitors can keep track of their efforts to stay in shape!

A special thanks to our volunteers from Scottish Water who installed the posts at Balgray Reservoir.

# Spotlight on park wildlife

## Eilidh & Joe's wildlife witter

AS THE COUNTRY PARK'S countryside rangers we are lucky to be out and about most days and as a result see some spectacular wildlife. This summer was no exception. Our highlight was seeing two kingfishers sitting together at the Darnley Mill pond in June. The view you normally get tends to be limited to an electric blue streak as this beautiful bird flashes by. During June we also saw a

kestrel. These falcons used to be our most common bird of prey but we rarely see them in the country park now so this sighting was worth noting. Later in August, whilst working at Balgray Reservoir, we heard the unmistakable sound of a curlew which then flew overhead.

It has been a great summer for butterflies. During our annual count in mid July we saw the beautiful



Small tortoiseshell butterfly.

common blue butterfly and the equally stunning day-flying six-spotted burnet moth. A couple of weeks later whilst walking along the Balgray Reservoir path, next to the Balgraystone Road car park, we came across a swarm of hundreds of small tortoiseshell butterflies, probably only just emerged from their chrysalises. There were also hundreds of whites (small, large and green-veined)

in the same area.

Finally the exceptionally dry weather allowed us to get our waders on and walk parts of the Brock Burn that are normally too deep to reach. This meant we could carry out a survey for water voles, and although we did not see any, we came across several of their feeding 'gardens' and some droppings, so it was worth getting wet.

## CRIMP!



Joe taking kick samples.

CRIMP! NO, JOE ISN'T going for a new hairdo; but we were recently contacted by the Clyde River Foundation to take part in the Clyde Riverfly Monitoring Partnership (CRIMP). This is a citizen science project which is providing training in riverfly monitoring to volunteers across the eight counties in the River Clyde catchment. Riverfly monitoring can help protect the quality of our rivers, increase our knowledge and understanding of invertebrate populations and promote the conservation of their habitats.

Trained volunteers will do monthly health checks and send their results to the Clyde River Foundation. Kick samples will be taken at a number of sites and selected species counted

and recorded. This means any changes can be detected early, helping to inform the management of the fishery or freshwater ecosystem. Additionally if pollution is detected there is a rapid line of communication to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

The country park countryside ranger service recently undertook training as part of the project and last month took its first samples along the Brock and Aurs burns. The results were slightly disappointing with low numbers of the key species being recorded. This may have been due to the timing of larvae hatching, low water levels during the previous weeks or fluctuation in water level and temperature caused by

upstream reservoir outflow. But the great thing about this project is that it is ongoing, so we will be able to see next month if numbers increase, or if further investigation is needed into why they are low.

## REPORT ANY PROBLEMS

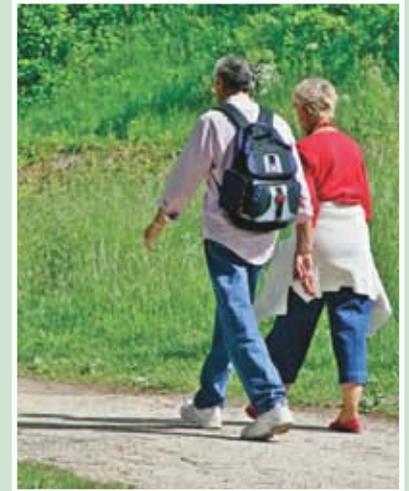
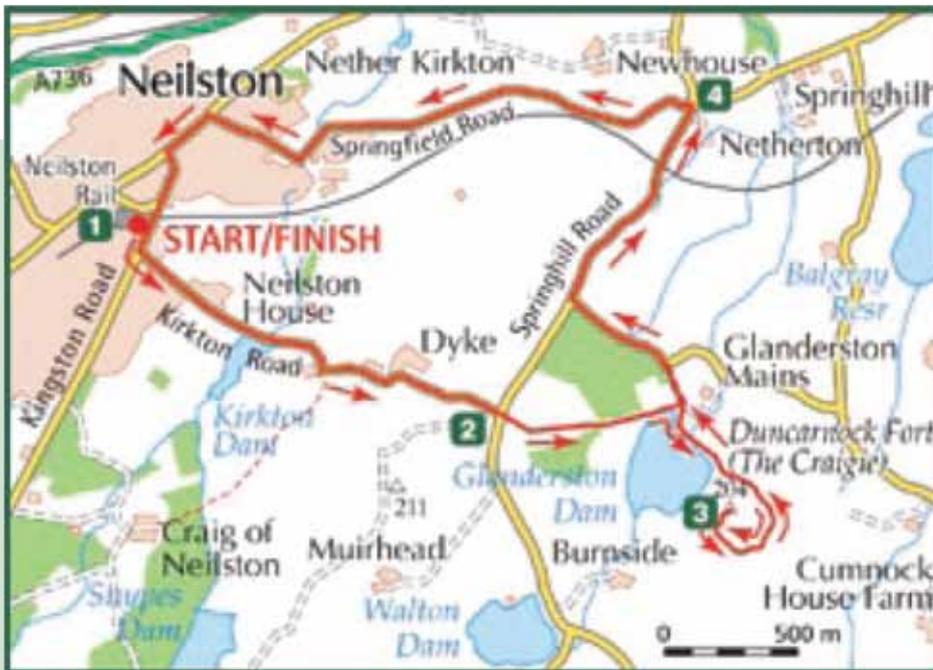


Report any antisocial crimes in progress to the police on **101**

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**





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## Two hills hike

ON 'THE BIG WALK – TWO HILLS HIKE' IN September we went up Neilston Pad and the Craigie. Two easily achieved hills with wonderfully rewarding views.

Neilston Pad is just to the south of the village of Neilston. The short walk up the pad allows amazing views over the local area and as far as Tinto Hill and Arran! At 260m (854 feet) it is one of the highest points in Neilston. If you are feeling particularly energetic there is an annual run up the pad around May. The route is off road and covers 4.5 miles with cups for the fastest male and female entrants.

Duncarnock, locally known as the Craigie, is just over 200m (669 feet). At its peak are the remains

of an Iron Age fort. This fort mainly consisted of earthworks so there is little remaining today. Archaeological studies revealed that the fort had walls that were 10 foot thick with an additional inner defence. In 1958 a piece of pre-roman native pottery and a fragment of worked shale were found near the fort.

If you are looking for further details of walking the pad and the Craigie from Neilston, as well as ideas for other local routes, then download the following booklet featuring ten walks in East Renfrewshire <http://content.yudu.com/Library/A1w4k0/EastRenfrewshireWalk/resources/index.htm> or contact the countryside ranger service.

## Spotlight on winter thrushes

### Thrush facts

- There are over 300 species of thrush worldwide.
- They can be split into two broad groups, the larger true thrushes and the smaller chats.
- The chats include familiar birds like robins, stonechats and wheatears.



Fieldfare © SteveKane.jpg

WE HAVE THREE RESIDENT 'TRUE' THRUSHES IN THE country park; blackbirds, song thrushes and mistle thrushes. As autumn arrives however two more members of the thrush family can be seen. Fieldfares and redwings are winter visitors from Scandinavia and other northern countries. Both species start to arrive towards the end of September and will stay until March.

Fieldfares are bigger and can often be seen in large flocks in the fields around the Barrhead dams or feeding

on the hedges that line Corselet Road. Redwings can also be seen around the dams but can also be spotted in the Darnley Mill area. Redwings often join the large flocks of fieldfares.

Both birds are typically thrush coloured, with brown backs and upper wings with a mottled chest, but the fieldfare has a distinctive slate grey head and lower back and also a black tail. The redwing does exactly what it says on the tin, it is bright orange or red on the underside of its wing.

# 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.

## Country park crafting

Friday 18 October, 2 – 4pm

**Description:** As part of the 'National Campaign for Drawing' do some natural crafting in your country park on this family event.

**Location:** Meet at the World Buffet restaurant car park (formerly the Ashoka), Corselet Road, off Nitshill Road, Darnley.



## Mushroom madness

Saturday 19 October, 11am – 1.30pm

**Description:** Do you know your mushrooms from your toadstools? We have many unusual species of fungi in the country park, so why not join us to learn more?

**Location:** Meet at the World Buffet restaurant car park (formerly the Ashoka), Corselet Road, off Nitshill Road, Darnley.



## Fright night

Saturday 2 November, 5.30 – 7.30pm

**Description:** There have been some spooky going on in the country park! Are you brave enough to take part in a torch lit tour and some gruesome games? Get your scariest costume on and join in the fun on this family event.

**Location:** Meet at the World Buffet restaurant car park (formerly the Ashoka), Corselet Road, off Nitshill Road, Darnley.



## Tree-mendous

Sunday 17 November, 1 – 4pm

**Description:** Join us on our yearly tree planting event as part of 'National Tree Week'. We may even decorate a few as well.

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



## Winter willow weaving

Sunday 1 December, 1 – 3pm

**Description:** Get creative with willow and make your very own natural Christmas decorations. You can make a wreath to adorn your door and wands to spread some seasonal magic! Full guidance will be given.

**Location:** Newton Mearns (venue to be confirmed).



## KEY CHART



Booking required



Wear suitable clothing



Wear spooky clothing



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](mailto:d2d@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

**Tel:** 0141 577 4053/54

**Web:** [www.damstodarnley.org](http://www.damstodarnley.org)



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