

## Make way for summer



Ox eye daisy; a sign of summer.

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

Inside you will find:

- **Spring events look back**
- **Wagtail circulation**
- **Joe and Alyson's wildlife witter**
- **Greening up the country park**
- **What do countryside rangers do?**
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The next edition of Wagtail will be out in autumn 2018.

## Last grip of winter

SPRING MAY HAVE TAKEN its time but our events in March and April went ahead regardless, with a great turnout as usual.

We got a reasonably chilly but clear night to spot some planets, constellations and stars at Balgray, with thanks to Glasgow University and their powerful scope.

The weather was not so kind for 'what's whittling', but we sheltered under the gazebo and kept warm with regular cuppas while wands, butter knives and spoons were crafted.

Our ever popular pond dipping event 'wet 'n' wild' uncovered the creatures beneath the surface of the flood pond and finally spotted some frog spawn.

The first of our April events, 'bedtime bugs', involved some of the slimier inhabitants of the country park, with plenty of snails and slugs coming out to greet us, as well as bats being detected round the pond on



Flood pond frog spawn.

our return to the car park.

Our Easter event involved more than 'one egg or two'. We made nests, mini dens, decorated eggs, pinned the tail on the Easter bunny and of course, hunted for chocolate eggs to finish up.

Our 'food for free' event was a surprise hit. Firstly, the sun was shining and it felt like summer might be coming, and secondly we managed to taste many of the edible plants found in the country park, even though the extended winter had delayed spring somewhat. Wild garlic pesto was made and sampled, along with botanical beverages, nettle covered cheese and dandelion coffee.

## Wagtail circulation



YOU MIGHT HAVE HEARD about the new General Data Protection Regulations which came into force on 25 May 2018. As we held names and contact details of everyone who receives a copy of Wagtail we needed to check that individual's privacy was protected. As a result we recently got in touch with all our email contacts to ask if they still wished to receive information relating to the country park.

Given limited resources we have also decided to

focus Wagtail's circulation by electronic means, via email and through the country park website and facebook page. Paper copies will still be available from local libraries.

So if we do not have your email contact details and you would like to receive a copy of Wagtail, and other country park news, just get in touch

We do realise that some people may not have an email address or easy access to a library, so let us know and we can still send you a paper copy.

# Spotlight

## on park wildlife

### Joe and Alyson's wildlife witter

WE THINK SPRING HAS finally sprung, but there are many species that have taken their time to emerge after the long winter.

We spotted a tree bumblebee in the country park for the first time (see our spotlight feature). It was even the first bumblebee we saw full stop.

Birds like the chiff chaff have returned from their sunnier climes and are starting to nest in the country park and the heron chicks are calling their

parents for food in the heronry.

The lowering of the water level at Balgray Reservoir has resulted in a shelduck being spotted on one of the islands. Meanwhile the swallows have been feeding over the waters on Waulkmill Reservoir to stock up on midges after their long flight back from Africa. House and sand martins have also been spotted flying around.

Long strings of toad spawn have been recorded



Toads and toad spawn.

in Eilidh's Pond along with staggering numbers of newts. These are very good signs that the pond is doing well, despite the recent drainage issues which caused it to silt up.

We will be carrying out a water vole survey over the next month or so after feeding runs and stations were spotted. The giveaway signs are small holes and tunnels through long grass near riverbanks with the blades of grass being nibbled

at a perfect 45 degree angle. By carrying out a survey we can determine how to protect the resident population in the country park by creating and managing their preferred habitat of long grass, which they can take cover under and feed on. Water vole populations in Scotland have declined due to loss of habitat and predation by the non-native American mink. So it is great to have them at Dams to Darnley.

## Greening up the country park

OVER THE LAST 18 MONTHS OR SO THE COUNTRY park seems to have been in a constant state of upheaval due to the new Scottish Water pipe. Now that the work has finished we have begun to look at how we can begin to address some of the impact that it has had.

Our first task is to try and return the Darnley bleach field area to something resembling its former self and, to that end, we have been busy planting trees and wildflower plugs and seeds. Along with a group of volunteers from Spinners Gate Resource Centre, we planted more than 400 native wildflower plugs. We are still working on the bleach field site and hope to remove a temporary path and plant the area up in the coming weeks.

Our own volunteer group has planted 12 larger, or standard, trees at the end of the avenue, near to where the pipe runs under the Brock Burn. The species mix was made up of oak, rowan and cherry. They also planted hazel whips, which are smaller than the standard trees.



Tree planting with volunteers.

At the Balgray Reservoir side we have been busy planting more than 1,200 trees. These are mainly hawthorns and blackthorns and we have been using them to repair some of the old hedging along the Balgray and Springfield Road path beside the railway. The hedges will provide excellent cover and food for birds and animals.

We were very fortunate to receive a £500 'grab-a-grant' from Volunteering Matters which met some of the costs of the work, whilst the trees were specifically funded by the environmental charity Trees for Cities.

# What do countryside rangers do?

IN EARLY 2018 THE SCOTTISH COUNTRYSIDE RANGERS' Association (SCRA) asked its members exactly what they had got up to in the previous year. Countryside rangers are professionals and the majority of the 269 full-time and the many part-time rangers have degrees in conservation, zoology, biology, ecology or a similar discipline. This is important as countryside rangers are tasked with protecting, enhancing and surveying the biodiversity of the areas where they work. They are also responsible for raising awareness and understanding of access rights and responsibilities, including the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, amongst visitors, the general public and land managers.

The SCRA survey concentrated on the environmental education and volunteering work that we do and the results showed that countryside rangers saw over 68,000 pupils during the year. These ranged from nursery right up to university level. Here at Dams to Darnley we saw 1,312 pupils either in the country park or when we visited them. Many countryside rangers also 'teach the teachers' and the



Pond dipping during a school visit.

country park countryside rangers ran several Continuing Professional Development courses for local teaching staff on environmental and outdoor education.

Throughout Scotland countryside rangers engaged with 26,677 volunteers in practical conservation. This total includes over 800 hours of volunteer work at Dams to Darnley with our own volunteer group. Finally, over 50,000 people attended countryside ranger led activities in Scotland, including more than 400 at our own free events.

So with these statistics it is not surprising that countryside rangers play such an important role in improving the health, education and environment of their local community.

## Spotlight on the tree bumblebee

### Tree bumblebee facts:

- **First recorded in Scotland in 2013.**
- **One of the first bumblebees to be seen in spring.**
- **Nest searching queens have been known to evict blue tits and use their nests for themselves.**

THE TREE BUMBLEBEE (*BOMBUS HYPNORUM*) IS A VERY distinctive bee and is easily identified. The thorax is tawny to reddish brown, the abdomen is black and the tail is white. No other British bumblebee has these markings. It is a recent arrival from Europe, with the first UK recording in 2001. It has slowly made its way north since then and appeared in the country park for the first time in April.

Unlike many recent arrivals the tree bumblebee does not seem to do any harm to our native wildlife and, as a pollinator, is probably a good addition. That is not to say that there are no issues with the tree bumblebee. As



Tree bumblebee.

the name suggests it makes its nest in tree holes or anything similar. This includes holes in houses and, in particular, bird boxes. This has led to many calls to the Beekeepers Association from people frightened about bee swarms in bird boxes or a buzzing coming from the walls of their house. Tree bumblebees have even been known to build nests in the fluff that has built up in tumble drier vents!

Global warming is likely to be behind its rapid movement northwards, but it has also been suggested that the British tradition of erecting nest boxes in gardens has greatly helped the tree bumblebee.

# 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.

## Midsummer meander for the summer solstice

Thursday 21 June, 9-11pm

**Description:** Enjoy great views over the wider countryside on the longest day of the year and celebrate the end of spring and the arrival of summer or Litha in the Pagan calendar. This event is celebrated in many different ways across the northern hemisphere. Join the countryside rangers for some solstice related shenanigans.

**Location:** Meet at the Balgray Reservoir car park, Balgraystone Road, off Springfield Road, Barrhead G77 6PG.



## Tree-mendous tales

Sunday 29 July, 10.30am-1pm

**Description:** Come along on this walk through the country park as we explore the fascinating folklore associated with some of our most common trees and find out a bit more about how our ancestors used them for many different things.

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



## Big Butterfly Count

Sunday 12 August, 2-4pm

**Description:** Join in with this national survey led by Butterfly Conservation as we try to count as many butterflies as possible. Or simply come along to learn a bit more about these fascinating insects.

**Location:** Meet at Parkmanor Green, off Parkhouse Road, Parklands Meadow G53 7ZE.



## Home-made homes

Sunday 26 August, 11am-2pm

**Description:** Join the countryside rangers on our ever popular den building event. Come along to this family day and try out your survival skills building a summer shelter. Then once we are finished you'll have somewhere to eat a picnic al fresco. All building materials and guidance supplied but not the picnic! So bring one with you.

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



## Scottish summer jammin' session

Saturday 8 September, 12noon-2pm

**Description:** Jam making in the outdoors? Come along and join the countryside rangers to help forage for edible berries and other fruit, then learn how to make jam from your bounty. Enjoy the jam with scones and a hot cuppa made with freshly boiled water from a storm kettle.

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



## KEY CHART



Booking required



Wear suitable 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)

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