

Forest fungi



Waxcap fungi. One of the many species you might find on our fungi foray in late November.

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

Inside you will find:

- **Summer events look back**
- **A peek into the past**
- **Joe and Alyson's wildlife witter**
- **The International Ranger Federation**
- **Aurs Road update**
- **Spotlight on parched ponds**

The next edition of Wagtail will be out in winter 2018.

Sizzlin' summer for events (almost)

WE HAD AN EARLY START to our summer events when a group of us got up with the birds for our dawn delight. It was a beautiful morning, and we heard many a tweet as the mist rose from the grasses and ponds, revealing a bright sunny day.

Our drop in 'treasure' hunt event took place at a much more civilised hour. Loads of groups were sent off with a quiz that required all the letters to be found from our orienteering posts. Another lucky day with the weather, perfect for a picnic.

Our midsummer meander for the summer solstice was a great success, although the midges had not booked on! Much fun was had and stories exchanged, and another gorgeous evening where the sun was present the entire time, making it actually feel like summer.



Dawn sunrise over the flood pond in Darnley Mill.

Our luck with the weather ran out when it came round to our tree-mendous tales walk, as we traipsed round Dams to Darnley in the rain for the entire time. There are some weird and wonderful myths attached to some of the trees in our country park!

A peek into the past

FOR THOSE OF US WHO like poring over old maps, the digitised collection available on the National Library of Scotland's website (www.maps.nls.uk/) provides a fantastic resource.

For Dams to Darnley, a closer look at some of the available Ordnance Survey maps shows in detail the changes that have taken place since the middle of the nineteenth century. You can view maps created at various scales and snapshots in time.

Apart from the regular increase in the scale of housing surrounding the country park, the starkest changes have taken place within Darnley Mill. Today, this part of Dams to Darnley is made up of a mosaic of habitats, including open water, grassland, scrub and woodland; ideal for countryside ranger led environmental education activities. But take a look through the national library's maps to see the



1:2,500 scale map of the Darnley Mill area, published in 1959. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. www.maps.nls.uk/

industrial scale and variety of activities which once took place here.

Head a little further south into Waulkmill Glen and you can also see the original layout of Darnley House.

There are still a few clues to the history of the country park left on the ground today if you look closely and have an old map to follow.

Spotlight

on park wildlife

Joe and Alyson's wildlife witter

ONCE AGAIN THE WEATHER seems to have had an effect on our wildlife. In late April we had snow and the beginning of May was cold and wet. Then suddenly it was summer, with blazing sunshine and bone dry conditions for weeks on end.

Our migrant birds seemed to be late in arriving. The swifts were particularly delayed, and when they did arrive they were also down in numbers this year. On

a more positive note, with the water level at Balgray Reservoir much reduced, we have had good sightings of common and green sandpipers, black-tailed godwits, dunlin, whimbrel, sanderling, redshank and little ringed plover over the summer months.

Wildflowers made the most of the good weather in early summer, but by August they seemed to have suffered in the heat as well. By the middle of August



Water scorpion.

most wildflowers had disappeared.

Butterfly numbers have been very poor this year. Apart from the occasional peacock or red admiral, it seemed to be only whites that were around.

Most of our ponds looked somewhat parched due to the lack of rain, but there was still an abundance of damselflies and dragonflies. Indeed it seems we are getting more dragonflies every year.

We have also found top predators such as water scorpions (*Nepa cinerea*) and great diving beetles (*Dytiscus marginalis*), so there must still be enough food for them to eat. It is good to know that although parched, our ponds still seem to be healthy.

The weather has certainly been unusual this year and, no doubt, winter will be here before we know it!

The International Ranger Federation

IN OUR LAST ISSUE OF WAGTAIL WE LOOKED AT WHAT Countryside Rangers do in Scotland. In this issue we thought it useful to look further afield, and focus on the work of the International Ranger Federation; the official body representing rangers around the world.

The federation was founded in 1992 at the Peak District National Park in England. An agreement was signed between the Countryside Management Association, representing Rangers in England and Wales, the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association and the U.S. Association of National Park Rangers. Sixty five ranger associations from around the world have now affiliated to the federation, with the aim of protecting the world's natural and cultural heritage.

Rangers are on the front line in our terrestrial and marine parks, ensuring that the flora and fauna that live in them are protected from vandalism, poaching, theft, exploitation and destruction. So globally their work can stretch from protecting and enhancing ponds within Dams to Darnley or saving elephants from poachers in Africa.



Rangers around the world celebrating World Ranger Day.

In the last two years 247 rangers have been killed in the line of duty. A few are workplace accidents, some are killed by elephants, but most have been murdered by poachers or illegal loggers. Last year in The Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 rangers were killed by insurgents whilst protecting the gorillas and elephants of this huge country. It is not only in Africa that rangers face such danger in carrying out their work. In 2017 two rangers were killed by a hunter in Spain.

So whenever you see a Countryside Ranger in Scotland, just remember we are part of a worldwide organisation doing our best to protect and enhance our natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

Aurs Road update

THE NEXT STEP IN CREATING SAFE ACCESS FOR pedestrians and cyclists between Barrhead and Newton Mearns, to and through the country park, will shortly get underway. Following on from the ground investigations which took place during last winter, the next stage is to appoint a team to produce detailed designs for the Glasgow City Region City Deal project to realign Aurs Road. The design team will work through this winter and into Spring 2019. The creation of a new active travel path running parallel to Aurs Road, improving access for pedestrians and cyclists, is central to the Aurs Road project. The current programme timetables the work to start in late 2019.

Detailed designs for the proposed Balgray Reservoir boardwalk, which would form an element of the path route, will also be progressed as part of the work. This will build on the scheme designs for the boardwalk which were completed by landscape architects erz earlier this year. There is still lots of work to be done in collaboration with Scottish Water to enable the boardwalk to progress, but the completion of



Sketch of how the boardwalk might look.

detailed designs is another stage along the way.

In a significant boost, funding has been secured from Sustrans Community Links to meet the cost of the detailed design work associated with the new walking and cycling routes, including the proposed boardwalk. This funding will also examine and develop options to improve wider connecting pedestrian and cycling links within Barrhead and Newton Mearns.

Spotlight on parched ponds

We thought we would give you some advice about what to do if your pond dries up:

- **Overheating can cause more problems than running out of water, so add planting to create shade.**
- **Allowing ponds to dry out is a natural process. This is why some species have adapted to be mobile and are able to recolonise new ponds so quickly.**
- **If a pond is in danger of completely drying out, adding a little tap water should be fine.**
- **Collecting rain water in butts is a good way of being able to save water and pondlife in your garden.**
- **If your pond is lined, make sure you have some soil/silt/stones at the bottom to allow creatures to burrow and hide in times of low water levels.**
- **Ponds that occasionally dry out have been shown to have richer biodiversity than ponds that do not!**

For more information visit:
www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/



Common darter dragonfly beside a dry pond.

WITH OUR UNUSUALLY WARM SUMMER, THE PONDS IN the country park have resembled muddy puddles rather than the bodies of water that we are used to seeing. But don't panic! Many creatures and plants are adapted to survive periods of drought and require as little as 2-5cm of water, even tadpoles. Froglets can actually drown if there is nowhere for them to rest.

Only some lifecycle stages require water to be present in a pond; adult stages emerge and fly away e.g. dragonflies, damselflies, mayflies. Some larval stages can also survive in only damp vegetation.

If you have a pond that was initially filled with tap water, topping it up in the same way should not affect it too much (tap water has added nutrients), but you may want to reconsider if you have a clean water pond (from rain water or water from an established pond).

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.

Bats in the belfry

Thursday 27 September, 6.45-8.30pm

Description: Come along to our annual bat walk and find out more about these fascinating creatures. Use bat detectors to hear their ultrasonic calls and watch them flying over your head.

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



Autumn arts & crafts

Wednesday 17 October, 1-3pm

Description: Join the countryside rangers for an afternoon of autumnal arts and crafts while leaves are falling – maybe you could make something from them? All materials will be provided.

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



Fright night

Saturday 27 October, 6.30-8.30pm

Description: Are you brave enough to meet up with the countryside rangers for some ghostly goings on and Halloween games and fun? Remember to dress up!

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



Diwali

Saturday 10 November 2.30-5.30pm

Description: Join the countryside rangers in partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland and a storyteller to celebrate Diwali, the Hindu and Sikh festival of light. Make a lantern and then head out for a walk round the country park as it gets dark. Brighten up the way with your creations to celebrate light over darkness, good over evil, knowledge over ignorance and hope over despair.

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



Forest foray for fungi

Sunday 25 November, 11am-1pm

Description: Join the countryside rangers to put the fun into fungi on a foray through the country park. We will be on the lookout for some fascinating specimens found throughout Dams to Darnley. Could you identify cups that could kill you or ceps to make soup? Come along and find out.

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



Rudolf, reindeers and wreaths

Tuesday 11 December, 7-9pm

Description: With Christmas fast approaching it is time for our annual get together to make and decorate willow wreaths. Book early for our most popular event.

Location: Venue to be confirmed.



KEY CHART



Booking required



Wear suitable clothing



Bring a torch



Wear spooky clothing

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 kept up to date, please contact us by phone or email with your details and we will add you to our mailing list.

Data Protection Act 2018

The information you supply to us will be used by East Renfrewshire Council to contact you with respect to Dams to Darnley Country Park. We may also use your information to verify your identity where required, contact you by post, email or telephone and to maintain our records. You can find out more about how we handle this information and your rights in respect of it by going to www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/dataprotection. If you wish a paper copy please let us know by contacting us at dpo@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or by telephone at 0141 577 3001. You can also see a copy of our Privacy Notice at www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/strategyprivacy.

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