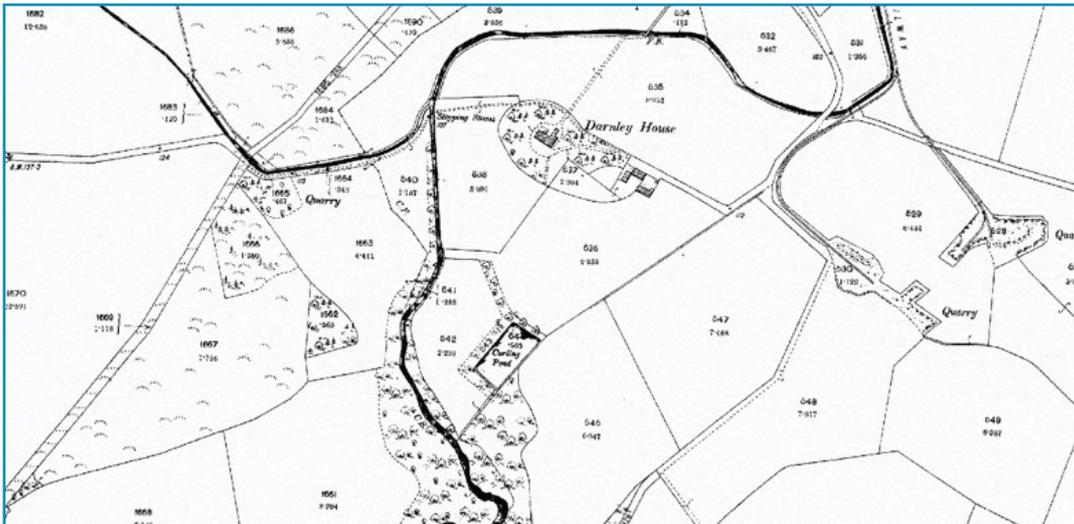


Lost landscapes



Late nineteenth century map of Darnley House curling pond (c) Crown Copyright 100023382 2019.

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

Inside you will find:

- Events look back
- Balgraystone Road
- Joe's wildlife witter
- The mammals of Dams to Darnley
- Darnley House curling pond
- Spotlight on brambles

The next edition of Wagtail will be out in Spring 2020.

Events look back



Giant hogweed – a country park alien.

2019 EVENTS HAVE BEEN a mixed bag. Our first event in March was to be an orienteering day, however there was a warning for heavy snow so we had to cancel.

We had much better weather on our Easter event. The sun was out and the annual Easter egg decoration and hunt was great family fun.

In May our 'newts in our nets' event turned up some fabulous beasts. Just about everyone managed to catch at least one water scorpion. We also managed to net newts, diving beetles, shrimp, caddis fly larvae, dragonflies, damselflies and mayflies.

Our following event was entitled 'aliens in the park' and involved a few hours looking for species which are non-native to Scotland. We discovered that there are a surprising number of alien species out there. Many have become naturalised over the years, whilst some are invasive and cause huge damage to our native wildlife or our economy.

Our annual 'big butterfly count' was a complete contrast to last year's event where we only counted one butterfly. This year, thanks largely to an influx of painted ladies, we counted over 100 butterflies from several species.

Balgraystone Road

AFTER A BIT OF A DELAY work is now well underway to improve Balgraystone Road between Springfield Road at St. Luke's School, Barrhead and the country park next to Balgray Reservoir. The work is one of a number of Glasgow City Region City Deal funded projects within the country park. It aims to improve access to the proposed new housing and railway station at Barrhead South in addition to the country park.

The improvements will involve realigning and resurfacing the road and its steepness will also be reduced. Importantly a new

pedestrian and cycle route will also be created, connecting Springfield Road to the existing Balgray Reservoir path.

The work means that there is no access to the country park along Balgraystone Road at the moment, but the path from Springfield Road, over the railway, to Balgray Reservoir is unaffected. Currently you can also still get to the Balgray Reservoir path and car park from the south (via Glanderston Road), but this access will be closed off during the latter part of the works. The project is anticipated to be completed in late 2019.



Balgraystone Road works underway.

Spotlight

on park wildlife

Joe's wildlife witter

IN OUR SPRING WAGTAIL I mentioned that last year was another poor year for butterflies and that ringlet numbers in particular were down. I am pleased to say that this year has seen ringlet numbers bounce back. In May and June they seemed to be everywhere, as were painted ladies. In contrast, damselfly and dragonfly numbers seem to be down this summer. I am not sure if this has been noted elsewhere.

It seems to have been a good summer for our wildflowers, with swathes of clover, knapweed, trefoil and ox-eye daisies carpeting the fields. Surely the warm weather has helped.

One very noticeable change this summer is the lack of swifts and swallows. The few that did arrive came very late. This seems to be the same throughout the country. One theory is that it is a result of the



Painted lady butterfly.

weather in Africa. It is not necessarily to do with rain or cold temperatures; it is drought which has affected them.

One bird that was always strangely missing from our records was the nuthatch. It was first recorded in Scotland in 1989 and is now found as far north as Inverness. However they

seemed to avoid Dams to Darnley! The good news is that this year we finally have some nuthatches in the country park and we also think they have bred.

Finally, some more good news. Last year we had our first record of a tree bumblebee in the country park and this spring they seemed to be everywhere.

The mammals of Dams to Darnley

OVER THE YEARS WE HAVE WRITTEN A LOT ABOUT THE birds, plants and insects found in the country park, but only occasionally have we mentioned some of the mammals. In total twenty mammals have been recorded in the country park. Some are much more common than others. The most commonly seen mammals are fox, grey squirrel and roe deer. The deer are quite shy, but although the squirrels are few in number they are easily seen next to Southpark Estate.

Brown rats and wood mice will be present in large numbers but are not often seen. We also have bank, field and water voles, with field voles being the most common. You might find a small shrew lying dead on the path at this time of year or notice their high-pitched squeak, although you might need young ears to hear it! This is usually a common shrew, although we also get water shrews. Other small, shy animals to be seen are weasels and stoats.

On summer nights three species of bat can be spotted. Common and soprano pipistrelle bats, as well as Daubenton's are numerous.

Moles are almost never seen, but mole hills are everywhere. Hedgehogs have been recorded, but the countryside ranger service have never come across one in the country park. Perhaps surprisingly, the same goes for rabbits. They are recorded, but this countryside ranger has



Grey squirrel.

never seen one, unlike the brown hare which is found in the fields around the dams.

Mink are also present, but numbers are falling, hopefully due to the increased presence of otters in the country park.

Finally, perhaps the most difficult mammal to spot in the country park is the badger, which seems to visit occasionally from nearby.

So next time you are in the country park see if you can spot any of our mammals or identify them by the tracks or poo they leave behind.

Darnley House curling pond

LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT DARNLEY HOUSE, WHICH was located to the west of Coreslet Road, and its association with the area's bleachfields. What evidence we have is mostly gained by following its rise and fall through various editions of historical Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. These show the gradual decline of the house and associated structures and designed landscape from its hey day at the time of the first series OS map (1856-95). Today even the name has disappeared from the area. Almost all of the structures have also been lost, but if you look closely you can discover one or two remaining glimpses of lost history, one of which is the old curling pond.

The curling pond is initially recorded in the first series map to the south west of Darnley House and the bleachfield site, although it appears to be annotated as 'Old Dam'. So it seems to have had a role in supplying water for the bleaching process. By the second series OS map (1896-98) it is marked as a 'Curling Pond'. But by the fourth series (1934-41), although the structure can still be seen, it is not annotated. So the curling pond seems to have gone out of use by this point.

Darnley House site is now surrounded by woodland,



Darnley House curling pond.

so the curling pond is hidden amongst the trees. Follow the path signed 'Waulkmill Glen Loop' from the car park at the south end of Corselet Road. Once you emerge from the trees continue along the path down the hill for 50m or so. The site of the curling pond is nestled in the woodland on the other side of the clearing. It can be hard to find in the woodland, especially in summer, and it is now filled with vegetation rather than water. Recently our dedicated country park volunteers have spent time clearing vegetation from the banks of the curling pond site, so you can now make out its dimensions and shape a little more easily.

Spotlight on brambles

Bramble facts:

- **The fruit of the bramble is not a true berry - botanically it is termed an aggregate fruit and is made up of twenty to fifty single-seeded drupelets.**
- **Brambles can grow several inches a day.**
- **Humans have been eating blackberries for thousands of years. Blackberry seeds are often found in the human waste unearthed at archaeological digs.**



Brambles.

WITH AUTUMN COMING UP THIS ISSUE'S SPOTLIGHT SHINES on the bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg). The fruit of the bramble plant is the blackberry, although in Scotland and the North of England they tend to be called brambles as well.

The scientific name contains the word 'agg' meaning aggregate. This is because the bramble is not one single species but several, slightly different species. In fact there are over 400 micro species, which explains why brambles can taste different from different bushes.

Throughout the summer we are continually cutting back brambles because they are so fast growing and seem to cover

the paths even as we watch them. The flowers of the bramble are a good food source for bees and other insects and the fruit is eaten by many animals including birds, foxes and badgers.

According to folklore, when the devil was cast out of heaven by St. Michael he landed on a bramble bush and cursed it. It was believed this caused blackberries to become unpalatable around 29 September, St. Michael's Day, after which they should not be picked.

In a more up to date sign of the times, the Oxford Junior Dictionary defines a blackberry as a mobile phone rather than a fruit!

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.

Bleach and bedrock

Saturday 21 September, 11am-1.30pm

Description: Find out about the fabulous geology of Dams to Darnley and how the rocks beneath our feet have been used over the centuries and the impact that this has had on the landscape we see today. Join us for a walk through 320 million years of the country park's history.

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



Going batty!

Thursday 26 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 Patterson overflow car park, opposite side of the road from Patterson Railway Station, Newton Mearns G77 6NR.



Arts and crafts afternoon

Tuesday 15 October, 1-3pm

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

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



Ghosts and games

Saturday 26 October, 6.30-8.30pm

Description: Join in some Halloween hijinks and games on our spooky Saturday event.

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



Mushroom madness

Sunday 10 November, 11am-1pm

Description: Why not put the fun into fungi on a foray through the country park? We will be on the look out for some fascinating specimens found throughout Dams to Darnley.

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



Christmas crafts

Tuesday 10 December, 7-9pm

Description: Get Crafty and make your own Christmas wreath from willow and other natural material at our annual festive event. Book early to avoid disappointment. All materials will be provided.

Location: Venue to be confirmed.



KEY CHART



No booking required



Booking required



Wear suitable clothing



Bring a torch



Wear spooky clothing

Join our mailing list or contact the countryside ranger

If you would like to be added to the mailing list for Wagtail and our annual events calendar please contact us by phone or email with your details.

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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