

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No.53



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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

Chairman's Report following the Annual General Meeting.

We had a full and varied meeting. We heard first from Alison MacKintosh, who gave us an informative short talk on the theme of "What is History", followed by the AGM business.

The walks and talks during the past year were well attended and will continue in 2015. Hugh Edwards reported on the walled garden, which had been awarded the Green Flag again for 2014.

The chairman acknowledged the contribution of the Tower opening volunteers and added that more willing volunteers would be most welcome to sustain the rota. We opened the Tower on 19th & 25th April in connection with the John Muir Way anniversary.

We welcomed Helen Stockham from City of Edinburgh Council, who gave a very interesting presentation on the Living Landscapes Project and the impact it was likely to have on the environment on the hill.

The following were appointed/re-elected to serve on the committee:-

CHAIRMAN - Gordon Swann

TREASURER & VICE CHAIRMAN -Fred Davies

SECRETARY -Peter Taylor

COMMITTEE MEMBERS -

Eddie Maclennan

Dr Brian Moffat

Hugh Edwards

Ian Moore - was appointed as a new committee member.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS.

We are currently updating our membership records, so that we can send you your Newsletter and keep you informed of all events.

Membership renewals and donations can be sent to:-

Gordon Swann (Chairman), 1 Dovecot Road, Edinburgh EH12 7LF

Fred Davies (Treasurer), 5 Saughtonhall Place, Edinburgh EH12 5RH or placed in any of our boxes in the following, Corstorphine Library, Blackhall Library,

Drumbrae Library Hub and Balgreen Library

SUMMER PROGRAMME

Trees of Corstorphine Hill, Sunday July 12th at 2 pm.

Brian Moffat will lead a walk around the Hill to explore the variety of trees both native and planted, which characterise our beautiful Nature Reserve. Meet at the Walled Garden at 2 pm.



Bug Hunt

Sunday 9th August, 2 pm in the Walled Garden.

Family Bug Hunt for butterflies, bees and anything else we can catch !



Fungus Foray

Sunday 27th September

The ever popular Fungus Foray for families.

Meet at 2 pm, Kaimes Road car park.

Fancy a garden visit?

Why not pop along to Jean Knox's garden at 95 Oxgangs Road, Edinburgh EH10 7BA, opposite Hunter's Tryst, on Sunday 19th July between 2pm and 5pm. ,where it will be open under Scotland's Gardens Scheme. Admission £3. See Scotland's Gardens web site for full details.



PENICUIK RANGERS

Penicuik Estate in Midlothian has been awarded a £65,000 grant from SNH which, over a three year period , will enable two recently appointed Rangers to set up a brand new Countryside Ranger Service.

A Ranger Service Visitor Centre will be based at Penicuik House. The Estate's network of excellent paths provides many routes for the public to explore the estate within the designated landscape with its follies and wonderful views.

The Ranger Service will run events and guided walks as well as providing opportunities for educational and community groups. It will support groups, individuals and partners to carry out physical conservation and access tasks to improve understanding of habitat and visitor management on and around Penicuik Estate.

The grant meets many of SNH's funding criteria and the Rangers' social inclusion activities will introduce a wider range of people to nature and landscapes, including young people, people on low income and people with poor physical or mental health.

*Article by courtesy of Scottish Natural Heritage, from Spring/Summer magazine "Nature of Scotland" www.snh.gov.uk

Spring Bird Report



March-May 2015

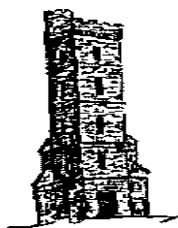
Lesser Black-backed Gulls returned from their wintering grounds to join the resident Herring Gulls on 3rd March. Hot on their heels were the first **Chiffchaffs**, singing on the Hill as early as 19th March. The remaining summer visitors arrived more or less on schedule, with **Swallow** on 9th April, **Blackcap** and **Willow Warbler** on 16th April, **Whitethroat** on 8th May and **Swifts** on 11th May.

Spring passage highlights included 3 **Crossbills** on 1st March, **Woodcock** on 19th March, **Redwing** on 6th April, a big movement of **Meadow Pipits** between 6th and 9th April, **Wheatears** on 9th and 22nd April, **Osprey** on 10th April and 75 **Pink-footed Geese** returning north on 21st April. Late movers were a **Redpoll** on 23rd May and a **Cuckoo** on 24th May.

Wanderers from the Lothian hills and coast during this period included **Cormorant**, **Curlew**, **Goosander**, **Great Black-backed Gull**, **Grey Heron**, **Grey Wagtail**, **Oystercatcher** and **Raven**.

44 species were recorded in March, 51 species in April and 46 species in May. The long-term total for Corstorphine Hill now stands at **90 species**.

Ian Moore



The Tower will be open to visitors on Sunday afternoons, 2-4 pm from 3rd May until 27th September

Friends of Corstorphine Hill thank the following for their funding:-



Building communities. Transforming lives.



City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service June Report

It has been a cold start to the growing season; nonetheless the hill is beginning to sparkle!

Edinburgh's Living Landscape project and associated relaxed grass cutting regime on the western flanks of Corstorphine Hill has made a huge visual impact already and will benefit insects with the increase in floral numbers over the whole season. If we feel the areas are beginning to look untidy or unmanaged during the season, we will top the grass to give that sense of a managed landscape.

Dutch elm felling has continued, a crumbling horse chestnut tree adjacent to Clermiston Road has been monolithed, another two horse chestnut trees on the eastern path network have evidence of disease and decay and will be required to be felled. Our Forestry teams are instructed to leave as much standing deadwood as safely possible, to resist chipping brush material in favour of stacking and leaving any felled timber in-situ. These simple measures can have huge knock-on benefits for insects, birds and other wildlife.

You may have noticed a timber chicane appearing across one of the paths above Hillpark. This along with others and additional on site signage will continue to be phased in over a longer period of time. The aim is to provide a safer path network across the whole site ensuring everyone can enjoy Corstorphine Hill whatever activity they are pursuing.

Some Primary 6/7's from Stenhouse Primary School as part of their John Muir Award assisted with some path maintenance on the John Muir Way (a small section of which runs over Corstorphine Hill), visited Corstorphine Hill Tower and learned about the healthy badger population in the area.

The Kaimes/Cairmuir glade is now on a schedule for cutting with a longer term aim of reducing the volume of rank, ruderal vegetation. The first step is to implement a cutting regime, begin removing arisings to reduce soil fertility and latterly look to improve through spraying small areas with herbicide and re-seeding with native wildflowers and planting of wildflower plugs.

Our nemesis Himalayan balsam is back with gusto! The north eastern quadrant of the Hill is suffering badly. Herbicide use in Local Nature Reserves is kept to an absolute minimum however the battle to control Himalayan balsam is being lost. Attempts at strimming as a control measure last year failed due to the resource and input required. Areas completely dominated by balsam will be targeted with herbicide over this growing season and closely monitored for effectiveness.

As always, comments, wildlife sightings and suggestions are most welcome. Please get in touch.

David Kyles

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