

# Friends of Corstorphine Hill

## NEWSLETTER No.62



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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

### Chairman's Report.

We have had the first of our Spring-Summer walks in April when Gordon Swann led about 20 people around the Highlight of Corstorphine Hill walk detailed in Ian Moore's new leaflet. It was a beautiful day for an interesting and enjoyable walk. The rest of this year's walks are described below.

The repairs to the Tower are now complete and we were able to open to visitors on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May, and will continue until the end of September, Doors Open Days weekend. We are still short of volunteers to help us to open the Tower on Sundays 2-4 pm, so if you feel you could help us out on a few days please contact me. We still continue to participate in the Edinburgh Friends of Parks Forum, and at our last meeting Councillor Karen Doran, who has a particular responsibility for Parks and Greenspaces, and David Jamieson, Head of Parks and Greenspaces, gave us a detailed update on current policies and future developments for the City's parks and greenspaces. Let us hope that the present (mid May) spell of summer weather continues. Enjoy your summer, and visit the Hill often.

#### **FOCH GDPR PRIVACY POLICY**

**The Friends of Corstorphine Hill (FOCH) is a registered charity. FOCH holds personal information about members provided by members when joining. This comprises names, addresses, telephone numbers and e mail addresses.**

**Personal information is not shared with other organisations.**

**Personal information is used for the purposes of maintaining lists of members, distributing newsletters, publicising FOCH events such as walks and talks and recording membership payments and donations.**

**Personal information is stored securely on two computers held by the Treasurer and Secretary. Data is transferred only between these places. Data is processed solely for the purposes of FOCH. The Data Protection Officer is the FOCH Treasurer.**

**Members may request a copy of their own personal data held by FOCH by e mailing FOCH [address] Members may up date their own data held by FOCH by e mailing FOCH [address]**

**Members may request deletion of their personal data at any time.**

**Personal data is routinely deleted on termination of membership.**

**Enquiries regarding this privacy policy should be directed to The Secretary, FOCH, [pstay@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:pstay@blueyonder.co.uk)**

## **SUMMER PROGRAMME**

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June**

### **WILD FLOWER WALK AROUND CORSTORPHINE HILL**

**Dr Brian Moffat will lead a walk over the hill to find and identify the great variety of summer wild flowers growing there.**

**Meet in the Walled Garden at 2pm**



**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July. Hunt for Butterflies, Bees and Bugs.**



**A family outing led by**

**Gordon Swann and David Adamson.**

**Sharp eyed children required ! Please bring a small plastic jar to catch and observe the insects, also a magnifying glass if you have one.**

**Meet in the Walled Garden at 2 pm.**

**Sunday August 5<sup>th</sup>. Trees of Corstorphine Hill.**

**Led by Brian Moffat. Brian will show us the variety of tree species, native and introduced to be found on the Hill.**

**Meet in the Walled Garden at 2 pm**

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September. The ever popular**

**Family Fungus Foray, led by David Adamson to find and identify these autumn fruiting occupants of the woodland.**

**Meet at Kaimes Road car park at 2 pm.**

## **BIRD REPORT SPRING/SUMMER**



Average March temperatures on the Hill were 5C lower than 2017 – and this was reflected in the behaviour of ‘early’ species such as Mistle Thrushes, which delayed nesting by almost a month, and Chiffchaffs, which alighted from Africa two weeks later than usual. When Spring finally arrived in mid-April, migrants scrambled to catch up, and the likes of Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Swallow and Swift were only a few days behind their usual schedules.

Spring passage migrants included Woodcock, Redpoll, Siskin, Crossbill, Cuckoo, Hooded Crow and “EJ”, Loch Garten’s long-standing female Osprey, which passed over the Hill at 6am on 21<sup>st</sup> March, arriving at the nest site in Abernethy just before 6pm the same evening!

Most of the woodland residents have survived the protracted winter, and Great Spotted Woodpecker, Tawny Owl, Sparrowhawk, Stock Dove, Jay, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Goldcrest and Long-tailed Tit all appear to be thriving.

The more disappointing news is that several recent breeding species are absent this year: Kestrel, Green Woodpecker, Pheasant, Whitethroat, Linnet, Pied Wagtail, Rook and Yellowhammer. This picture reflects the pan-European trend, the catastrophic collapse of farmland bird populations since the inception of the CAP. With agrochemical monoculture unsuitable for wildlife, it seems there simply aren’t enough young being produced to re-stock suburban havens such as Corstorphine Hill.

For regular flora & fauna updates visit: <https://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com> or connect via the ‘web links’ page on the FoCH website.

Ian Moore

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



# ***City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service Report***

## **Green Flag peer review**

As part of the Green Flag Group Award that Edinburgh holds, peer judges review the policies and strategies the Council has for managing its greenspace every two years and assesses the risk of the Council failing to maintain its Green Flag Award parks to the required standard of which Corstorphine Hill holds a site Green Flag Award alongside a Green Flag Community Award associated with the Walled Garden and the work the Friends do there. The judges pay particular attention on how Green Flag has been adopted into various strategies and through the self-assessment regime we operate across our entire stock using the Green Flag criteria and how it uses the information to improve, not only the Green Flag Award winning sites but all parks across the Council estate. Two judges from Birmingham City Council visited Edinburgh on the 14th & 15th May 2108 and embarked on site visits that included trips to Corstorphine Hill, Starbank Park, Figgate Park, Muirwood Park, Hermitage of Braid and Seven Acre Park, spending around 30 - 40 minutes in each park and meeting the park managers, site officers and members of the Friends Groups. Following this, the judges took some time to deliberate their findings and presenting some initial feedback to officers with a full report to follow in the coming weeks. The judges stated that they were hugely impressed with the quality of each of the parks visited, mentioning that they were very clean and well maintained and noting the Friends Groups involvement in each. The relationship between the Council and Friends group was noted as excellent. The judges felt that it was clear the Edinburgh had in place the various strategies, policies and procedures to deliver a quality parks service and although no significant concerns were raised the judges recommended a couple of strategic areas for improvement involving safety procedures especially around water courses and also ensuring that park management plans are updated to include measurable action plans and includes more information on waste minimisation, green waste removal amongst others.

## **Gorse fires**

You may have seen Arthur's Seat in flames during May, gorse fires burning viciously making local news headlines. What you may not have seen on local news was the south side of Corstorphine Hill on fire, gorse burning viciously, also an area of Easter Craiglockhart Hill and Blackford Hill suffered similar events. Ian Moore (Friends of Corst Hill and local resident) monitors birdlife across the hill said that, "The impact on the birds is quite apparent – Whitethroat and Linnet have arrived and attempted to set up regular territories, but seem to have abandoned, and there are about half the usual number of singing male Greenfinches. At least one pair of Long-tailed Tits were burnt out in the main fire on the east side. As many as 13 species nest in the gorse – it is sad to think of all of the nestlings that would have been fried in the big fire on Arthur's Seat – possibly hundreds". Please ensure you are careful with cigarette ends, fire lighting in Edinburgh Parks is not allowed but happens therefore if you are determined to have a fire, use a brazier or dig a fire pit/use bricks, ensure it is completely out and no trace is left before departing.

## **Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and Corporate Volunteering**

Several volunteer groups have been involved with INNS removal, namely salmonberry and Himalayan balsam. The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) have had lots of groups rescuing trees from strangling (not needed) tree guards and removing balsam.

We have been granted a license by Scottish Natural Heritage to introduce a rust fungus into populations of Himalayan balsam at Corstorphine Hill and the Hermitage of Braid only. The rust fungus is species specific and reduces vigour in a population over time limiting its ability to spread through viable seed. Hopefully this will enable us to regain control over the ever-advancing population of balsam present on Corstorphine Hill.

David Kyles

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