



Lanark Area SWT Members Centre

LANARK AREA MEMBER CENTRE BULLETIN ISSUE 37: MARCH 2011

WELCOME

Welcome to the March issue of the Lanark Area MC's bulletin 2011, which contains articles of general and local interest, updates on talks, events, etc. I hope you will all contribute news and events to future bulletin editions. Send any articles, photos and ideas to postmaster@lanarkswt.org.uk.

Upcoming talk

Wildlife Conservation on Ailsa Craig

A talk by Dr. Bernie Zonfrillo

Tuesday, 29th March, 7.30, St. Nicholas Church Hall, Lanark



Other events

March 13th: Whitelees windfarm tour.

We will be taking a guided bus tour around Whitelees Windfarm, the largest windfarm in Europe. £3; starts at 1 pm from the Visitor Centre on Moor Road near Eaglesham. See <http://whiteleewindfarm.co.uk/> for more information.

Contact Josanne Newton (01555893804) to book a place.

March 26th: Peregrine Experience

(Note this is a provisional date)

Opening of the Peregrine Experience at the Falls of Clyde Visitor Centre. There will also be a preview of the exhibition the previous evening. More details to follow.

May 28th: Tollbooth Fundraiser

We will be holding a bric-a-brac sale to raise funds for the Member Centre and the Peregrine Experience (see above). Bring any books, plants or other items for sale (but nothing electrical!), to either the March or April talks, or directly to the sale itself. We will also need some volunteers to help set up the fundraiser the previous evening, and to help man the stalls on the Saturday. E-mail postmaster@lanarkswt.org.uk for more details

SWT Falls of Clyde News

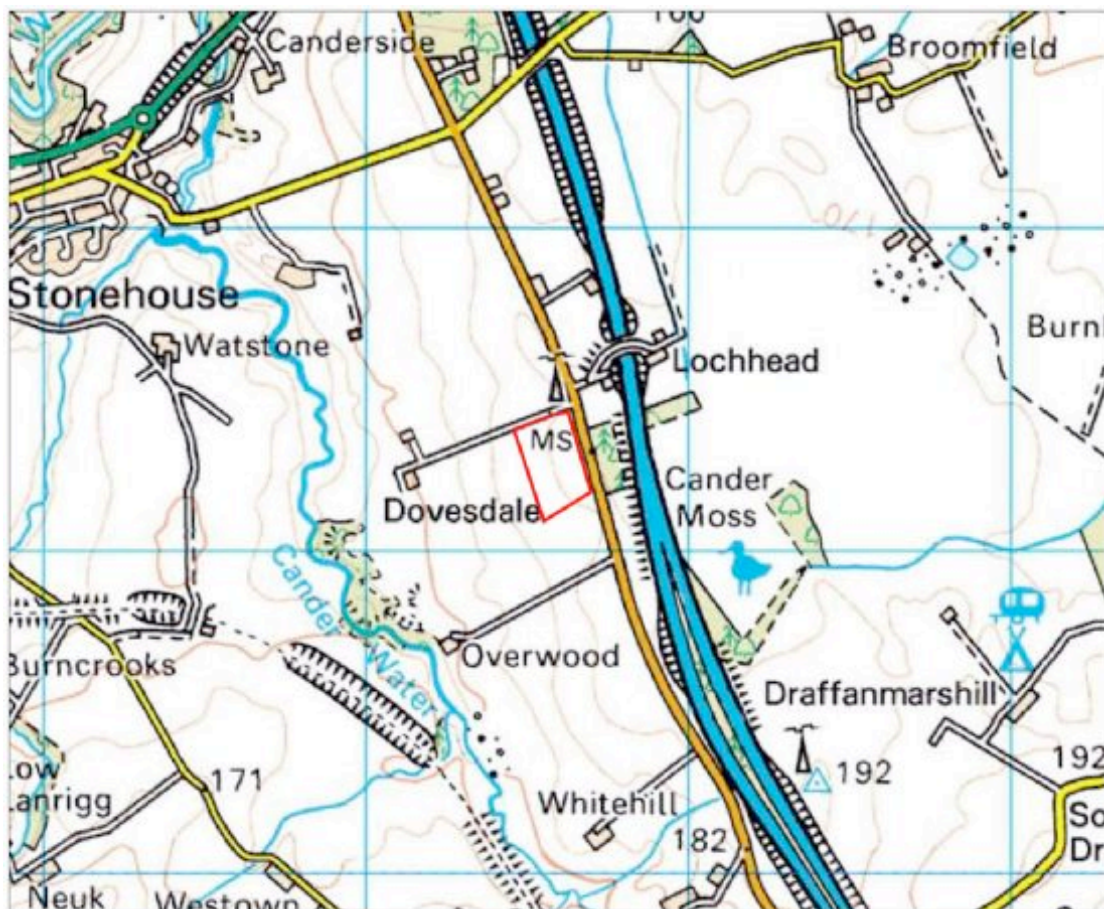
The famous Falls of Clyde badger Watches will be starting again later in the spring. Young badgers are born around February, and there will be a lot of hidden work going on at the moment; cleaning out bedding and bringing in food for the females. The newborn cubs are about 12 cm long with a covering of silvery fur. They won't venture out of the sett until March or April.

Courtship behaviour has been seen between the peregrine falcons in the gorge. It's early in the season, but the male has been observed bringing in food and dropping it in front of the female. Sometimes peregrines will pass food to one another mid-flight, a spectacular behaviour which is also adopted by hen harriers.

Other news

Dovesdale incinerator approved

The controversial proposal to build a gasification plant at Dovesdale has been approved by South Lanarkshire Councillors by a vote of 14 to 9, despite over 20,000 objections from the local community. Objections originally drawn up by SEPA were later withdrawn, which the Council relates to their decision. Protestors from the Dovesdale Action Group are considering their next move, and there are calls for the Scottish Government to call in the application for it to decide. The plant lies within 200m from the edge of the SWT Cander Moss reserve.



Site boundary of the proposed plant (<http://www.dovesdaleincinerator.info>)

Tackling hogweed

A £2.6 million EU-funded project has been initiated to repel the giant hogweed, which plagues many riverbanks in the UK. A whopping £12 billion is spent in Europe controlling this plant, which was introduced into Britain in 1893 as an ornamental plant. The CIRB Project, which stands for Controlling priority Invasive species and Restoring native Biodiversity, is based at Queens University Belfast, and will aim to control not only giant hogweed, but also other invasive plants such as rhododendron, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam.

As well as areas both sides of the Irish border, twelve Scottish catchments in the Argyll, Ayrshire, Galloway and Tweed areas will also be targeted.

CIRB project manager Dr Cathy Maguire, from Queen's School of Biological Sciences, described the problems these plants cause in local communities: "They take over river banks, preventing their use for angling and recreation. The giant hogweed also contains toxic sap that can cause painful blisters on anyone who comes into contact with it."

"By combining the latest scientific research with action on the ground, and by engaging with local communities to train people in how to identify and control invasive plants, we can prevent further environmental, economic and social damage."



Picture from Complete Weed Control

Female red grouse combs as fitness indicators

Red grouse are endemic to Great Britain and Ireland – they are usually considered a subspecies of the Willow Grouse (which can be seen from Scandinavia to Siberia and Alaska and Canada), but Red grouse developed in isolation from other Willow Grouse. It is a common sight on Scottish heather moors.

Red grouse have conspicuous red combs above the eyes. In the male grouse, this has long been held to be important in sexual selection. In the past, many scientists have thought that the only reason the females also have red combs, is just down to shared genes, and that in females it has no purpose at all. In contrast, a new study by the

University of Aberdeen and Museum of Natural History in Madrid, shows that there is also a relationship between the fitness (e.g. size, weight) of females and the size of their combs. In addition, when the female birds are treated for parasites, their combs increase in size. In other words, in *both* sexes of red grouse, the size of the comb indicates to a potential mate how fit the bird is



Female red grouse; NERC