



Lanark Area SWT Members Centre

LANARK AREA MEMBER CENTRE BULLETIN ISSUE 43: OCTOBER 2011

WELCOME

Welcome to the October 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 events

Don't miss our second talk of the season and find out about the Red Kites Project

The Red Kites Project at Argaty

by Mike McDonnell, Head Ranger at the RKP.

7.30pm, Tuesday 25th October, St. Nicholas Church Hall, Lanark

Field Trip to the Red Kites Project

Date: Sunday 6th November

Time: 9am - 5pm

Cost: £16 (including transport from Lanark bus station). Note spaces are limited.

We will be given a guided tour around the farm and then watch the birds feeding.

Food is put out for the kites each day throughout the year. The feeding, by the way, is actually minimal, it just gives the birds a helping hand. Up to thirty or so are attracted to the food depending on the weather and the season.



Red Kite/Mike McDonnell

H.A.W.K.S.

Here's some information about our local junior Watch Group. The name that we have adopted for our little group is H.A.W.K.S. Wildlife Watch Group. H.A.W.K.S. stands for 'Help Keep Wildlife Safe'. We arrange a variety of fun activities and events for children aged 8 and over. We meet once a month - the first Saturday of each month - at the Falls of Clyde, New Lanark. We do sometimes meet at other venues but we let our members and the Falls of Clyde SWT centre know long in advance. The activities we do include scavenger hunts, arts and crafts, fungal forays and much more - anything that teaches us more about wildlife and gets us closer to nature. Last month we built dens at the reserve, which was great fun and discussed animal homes. We have been bird watching, measured and studied ancient trees and been to see the peregrines feeding their chicks. These are just a few of our recent activities. The children contribute to the sessions too - we sometimes set a challenge for them for the following month related to the theme. They also get the opportunity to talk about anything interesting that they have come across in the past month that they can share with the other members. Activities usually cost £1 per person. For more information and a programme, go to <http://www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/things-to-do/falls-of-cl Clyde/>, call the Visitor Centre at 01555 665262 or e-mail hawks.swt@gmail.com. The next HAWKS meeting is at the top parking area for the Falls of Clyde on Saturday the 5th of November, where the theme will be migration and hibernation, and will involve some bird-box-building.



Other news

IUCN puts freshwater pearl mussels “on the edge”

The International Union of Conservation has just published a new book, “Species on the Edge of Survival”, detailing one species for each day of the year. They join a depressing selection of endangered animals including Javan rhinoceros and the giant panda. They’ve been included because of the dual threat from poachers and habitat loss, despite their protection under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. Only a year ago, a survey suggested about 75% of the country's internationally-important pearl mussel sites had been damaged by criminals. Criminal acts ranged from illegal pearl fishing to unauthorised river works which resulted in the destruction of entire freshwater pearl mussel populations. Wildlife crime officers and SNH launched Operation Caesar to safeguard the future of the species in Scotland.

Scotland has a total of 21 designated sites for pearl mussels, with Scottish rivers holding about half of the world's population of the species.

Source:BBC



Creative Commons

Dounreay leak will never be cleaned up

SEPA have admitted that two decades worth of radioactive contamination leaked from the Dounreay nuclear plant will never be completely cleaned up. The nuclear site, on the north coast, was decommissioned in 1993, but SEPA has given up on its aim to restore the surrounding marine site to a pristine condition, the main reason being that “it could do more harm than good”. Since 1997, a two-kilometre radius fishing ban has been in place. That is not to say that SEPA will not continue with its remediation, only that there is little hope of removing all the radioactive fuel fragments. The fragments are sand-grain-sized, and mainly contain traces of caesium-137, with a half-life of 30 years, and plutonium-239, with a half-life of 24,000 years, so it will be many millennia before they break down to benign products. However SEPA maintain that “ecosystems may be destroyed in trying to get to something which does not pose a significant hazard”. Disturbing the seabed may inadvertently bring some of the particles ashore, which would be fatal if ingested.

Source: The Guardian



The Telegraph

First Watson Raptor Science prize goes to red kite study

The Watson Raptor Science Prize, a prestigious new award has been awarded to an RSPB team led by Dr. Jennifer Smart for showing that the recovery rate of reintroduced red kite in northern Scotland has been limited by illegal killing of kites. The paper “Illegal killing slows population recovery of a re-introduced raptor of high conservation concern – The Red Kite *Milvus milvus*”, was published in the journal Biological Conservation and compared the fortunes of red kites from northern Scotland with those in similar habitat from the Chilterns. Whereas the northern Scotland population has reached barely 50 pairs in 17 years, the Chiltern population is now around 300 pairs. 40% of red kite carcasses proved to be illegal killings: now

that the root cause has been identified, the challenge to conservation managers and government is how to stop it.

See <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2010.03.002> for the abstract.

Source: *British Birds/BBC*



Steve Round, Surfbirds galleries

American tourist

Normally the RSPB reserve at Loch of Strathbeg plays host to thousands of wintering geese, but recently it has attracted an unusual visitor, an adult sandhill crane. These cranes normally breed in northern USA, Canada and the extreme east of Siberia, migrating south towards the southern USA and Mexico in the autumn. This individual may have been blown off course by Hurricane Katia. It is difficult to predict where vagrants such as this move next, but at the time of writing it has worked its way down the Northumberland coast.



At Loch of Strathbeg/Ron Marshall



Where it should be: Fairbanks, Alaska/J.Newton

Sperm Whale sighted off Skye

The largest predator in the world, a male sperm whale, was sighted in the Sound of Raasay by two locals. Calum MacAskill and his wife were returning from a wildlife trip to Rona when they spotted a tail fluke. Sperm whale sightings are rare off Scotlands west coast, and are generally in areas where the sea is over 100 metres deep, where the sperm whales can dive for squid and cuttlefish. Photos shown to the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust show that the whale had unusual circular dents behind the blowhole. While this can't be confirmed as due to a ship collision, it is an old wound which has healed, and does remind us of the threats to cetaceans and other large marine life.



Sperm whale off Skye/Calum MacAskill