

Lothians Conservation Volunteers

In support of the Scottish Wildlife Trust

Annual Review 2012 - 2013

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Welcome to the third LCV *Annual Review*. It's been another good year with, again, a likely record-breaking number of volunteer days achieved. Social events have also been well attended with a recent high point of simultaneous first and second place in the regular pub quiz.

In training news, Matt McCabe has now completed his DI training helping to address our slight shortage of drivers and we have also, with the assistance of SKM, carried out two courses in tree-felling techniques with a view to keeping a broad knowledge base of safe working across the group.

In other interesting news, Colin McLean—one of LCV's most important founding members whose sad death we reported this time last year—has generously left LCV a legacy. We're keen to consider all options in order to make best use of this and so will be giving all members the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process over the next several months.

Also the promised revision to our outdated constitution is finally underway with our Treasurer, David Monaghan, recently preparing an initial draft.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without continuing volunteer commitment so thanks go to you all for your many and varied efforts. I hope you enjoy reading about our year's activities in this Review.

Louisa Martin, Co-ordinator



**Lothians
Conservation
Volunteers**

www.lcv.org.uk





Lothians Conservation Volunteers

We are a Scottish Charity, run entirely by volunteers, and we've been doing conservation work in and around Edinburgh for over forty years.

We belong to TCV Community Network. Our funding comes from the clients that we work for, and also by grants from organisations like Scottish Wildlife Trust and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Charity number SC020384

*Supported by
grant aid from*



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

The Editor Writes...

What's in store for this year's *Annual Review*? Well, we start with an invitation to join us in a celebration of our late friend Colin McLean at a forthcoming social event; see page 3 for more details. Next, our very-much-alive friend and colleague Alan Krumholds of the Midlothian Ranger Service writes of our working partnership forged over many LCV tasks at Roslin Glen Country Park.

Simon takes us back to our epic meadow-raking adventure at Taynish and Louisa recalls our trip to see badgers at Beecraigs Country Park, both in September. Simon's November ceilidh report—a big success with another on the horizon—leads us appropriately into the festive period when we enjoyed several fantastic days exterminating invasive rhododendron at Scone Palace.

Did we ever manage to measure Colin's tree in the magnificent Scone pinetum? Turn to page 11 to find out. Louisa then reports on how we fared at East Lothian's Brock Wood when SWT's Sam Purkis shared his expertise by running two tree-felling courses for us.

In our final residential article Trevor shares his memories of our visit to Taynish and Moine Mhor in August, our first—and hopefully not last—summertime trip to this beautiful part of Scotland. We finish with Sharon's recipe suggestion: ideal fuel for our next residential.

Thanks go to all contributors. This is your newsletter and items from all LCV members are welcome. Most formats can be accommodated—handwritten, drawn, photographed or electronic. Just get in touch with the editor via mucker@lcv.org.uk if you have something you'd like to see included. I hope you enjoy our third *Annual Review*.

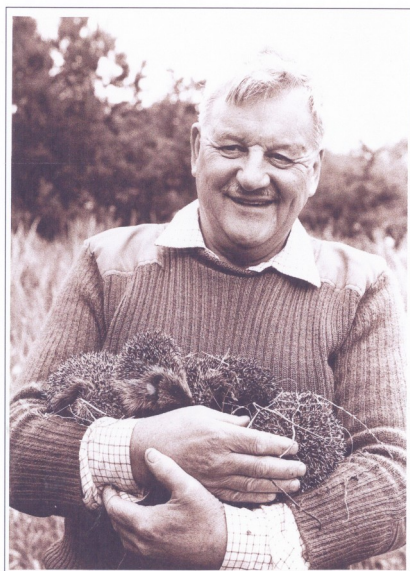
Sarah McConachie, Newsletter Editor



Help us find a fitting purpose for Colin McLean's legacy

Colin McLean was an important part of LCV's history and now, a year after his death, he's helping to shape our future too, in the form of a legacy he left to us in his Will.

It's a considerable sum, generously given and gratefully received, and we're keen to ensure that we put the money to the best possible use and that we do so in a way that's a fitting tribute to Colin. To achieve this we hope to explore as many ideas as possible and who better to help us with this task than you—the people who knew Colin—through work or volunteering or as a friend. Or, indeed, all three.



Colin with an armful of Uist hedgehogs.

Photo courtesy of Anna McLean

Save the date

On the afternoon of **Saturday 18 January 2014** LCV is hosting an event in Duddingston Kirk Hall where we can share ideas about the things we can do with Colin's legacy. The event will be part of our social calendar; there will be food to share and drinks to enjoy and afterwards, in keeping with LCV tradition, there will be a round or two of skittles at the Sheep Heid Inn.

We hope you can join us. Further details will be sent out later in the autumn, but in the meantime please save the date in your diaries. We'd love to involve as many of Colin's friends, colleagues and fellow volunteers as possible in making this important decision. And we also hope you will be as keen as we are to celebrate his passion for conservation and his many contributions to LCV.

Views

Lothians Conservation Volunteers in Roslin Glen

This varied site is always popular with our volunteers. Its Ranger, Midlothian Council's Alan Krumholds, explains how LCV's input complements his own endeavours.

Roslin Glen Country Park covers approximately thirty hectares and lies within the steep gorge woodlands of the North Esk valley. It is owned by Midlothian Council and is managed by Midlothian Ranger Service.

As site Ranger, I am responsible for managing the site and its wide range of habitats. Working with volunteers to improve biodiversity and access within the park are two of my key objectives.

Over the last ten years I have had the pleasure of working in partnership with LCV on a vast range of projects and conservation tasks. These have included tree planting, path construction and maintenance, seeding wildflower meadows and woodland management.

LCV plays a vital role in implementing the management plan for the site and are among my most experienced volunteers, having the necessary skills to undertake all required tasks. LCV's work programme also fits neatly with the site's operational plan, in that I can book the group in advance and plan and prioritise tasks on a seasonal basis.

The thousands of volunteer hours which LCV have given to Midlothian Ranger Service are invaluable, not just at Roslin Glen but at our other sites such as Vogrie Country Park and Springfield Mill. Without LCV a lot of the management on these sites—such as improvements for access and biodiversity—would simply not have happened.

As a Ranger I have a responsibility to ensure that all volunteers feel welcome and that they understand that their efforts will benefit both the wildlife of and visitors to Roslin Glen. So when I meet any new LCV recruits I will always deliver the full introductory sermon on what a great job LCV does and what a wonderful place



Roslin Glen's meadow and woodland.

Photo: Louisa Martin



LCV volunteer Charlotte at work.

Photo: Louisa Martin



James in action.

Photo: Louisa Martin



LCV's sinuous dead-hedge.

Photo: Rachael Taggart

Roslin Glen is. As an extension to this, over the years I have encouraged LCV to take ownership of the site and to feel part of the management process. This has taken time to develop and in my opinion it has been successful: LCV are now an integral part of the team.

In my time spent working with LCV I have come to know the group well and can direct them towards tasks which suit their particular skills. For example, Tony and Trevor are both pretty handy with a bow saw when there's tree-felling to be done. Willie and James are brilliant on path construction. Debbie—the fire-starter—can get a great blaze going on a cold winter's day and Matt, as the task organiser, is always at the end of the phone day or night.

Working in partnership with LCV has made my job so much more rewarding. I like to think that we have become friends and share a love of places such as Roslin Glen. That for the last four years Roslin Glen Country Park has achieved Green Flag Award status is surely a testament to this. Without the passion, dedication and hard work of volunteer groups such as LCV, these awards—whose judging criteria include conservation, community involvement and sustainability—would not be possible. Thanks guys - I'm looking forward to another ten years!

Alan Krumholds, Midlothian Ranger Service



Synchronised raking and beaver hunting: Tainish residential

September 2012

This year's autumn residential trip was to a site new for me, but for many other LCV members it is a well-loved one: Tainish National Nature Reserve. If you haven't been before, Tainish lies in part of the grounds of an old estate in Argyll and has wonderful views out onto Linne Mhuinch and Loch Sween. Scottish National Heritage (SNH) Ranger Gordon was a wonderful guide to the site and its surroundings, including a rebuilt piggery - sadly lacking pigs at present.

Although it was a longish drive from Edinburgh, the fish supper stop in Balloch broke the journey nicely and allowed a change of drivers. Saturday saw us on the site in glorious, warm sunshine for our task of meadow raking. It was fun being driven up and down to the grass heaps in the mini-truck, which happily saved a lot of grass bag dragging. In the evening we were able to delve into the Knapdale forest to see the beaver lodge. I'm afraid I have been wrongly influenced by TV and the lodge was actually an extremely well-engineered dam, not the random pile of branches I had been anticipating. Sadly, we didn't see any beavers, but apparently they are very shy and nine LCVers tramping about probably did not make for the stealthiest of approaches.

Sunday brought more grass raking, unfortunately in the rain towards the end of the day, but this didn't dampen our spirits too much. Supper was in the beautiful Lochgilphead before heading for home.

If you've not yet been to that part of the West coast, maybe pay a visit in the summer before the meadow raking commences. That way you might get to see the wild flowers and butterflies that the raking is helping to conserve.

The task was led by Debbie Tribak, catered for by Trevor Paterson, and Willie McSporran and yours truly drove the minibus. Thanks to all for a great weekend.

Simon Bonsall



LCV raking like there's no tomorrow.

Photos: Louisa Martin



Simon rakes...

Photos: Louisa Martin



...prior to loading the trailer with Willie and Gordon.

Beeccraigs Badger Watch

September 2012

After several false starts last summer it was a cautiously optimistic group that assembled outside the Filmhouse on a September evening, hoping for an evening of badger spotting. There was no time to waste if we were to make it into position before the badgers were out and about and so we jumped straight into the bus and headed for Beeccraigs. Pausing only to put on numerous spare layers of clothing, meet up with Willie and listen to the Ranger's instructions, we headed straight for the hide.

We were not, as it turned out, a moment too soon. Dusk was progressing nicely and the first thing I spotted on looking out of the hide was a badger. After a brief pause while I tried to persuade myself that I was looking at a badger shaped rock—surely it couldn't be that easy?—I was soon trying to express the phrase 'Shut-up-shut-up-shut-up: there's a badger!' in frantic sign language. This is pretty much as tricky as it sounds.

Still, we managed to avoid spooking the badger family too much and they ambled about in front of the hide searching for tasty morsels in the undergrowth. To add to the atmosphere, and help mask any noise we were making, the local rooks decided to lay on a deafening dusk chorus.

After an hour or so it was too dark to see anything at all, and even the rooks were settling down, so it was back to the bus for a spot of badger Q&A. We then made for the chip shop in Linlithgow for much-needed sustenance.

Thanks very much for Helen for organising this trip—especially as in the end she didn't manage to come—and to Trevor for driving.

Louisa Martin

Lothians Conservation Volunteers' Ceilidh

November 2012

Many thanks to everyone who came to this year's fundraising ceilidh - over 120 in total. It was lovely to see some new faces as well as others more practised in ceilidh dancing. As is traditional, LCV members staffed the bar and the door as well as assisting with set up and clear up: a big thank you goes to all who assisted on the night. It was great to see the dance floor of the South Side Community Centre full when the wonderful Hud Yer Wheesht ceilidh band struck up the tunes. Happily, we raised the magnificent sum of £500 which will go a long way towards providing tools and training in the coming year.

Heartfelt thanks go to all the organisations which sponsored the raffle and provided us with a great array of tickets to some of Edinburgh's top attractions, as well as a crate of beer. Our sponsors, in no particular order, included:

- Filmhouse
- Camera Obscura
- Scottish Seabird Centre
- Scotch Whisky Experience
- Royal Yacht Britannia
- Our Dynamic Earth
- LCV volunteer Lucy Storey of Heineken

Here's to next year! [*Saturday 9 November, 8pm until midnight with Hud Yer Wheesht in the Southside Community Centre, to be precise—Ed.*] In the meantime, keep a lookout for other LCV socials, coming to an evening near you.

Simon Bonsall, LCV Fundraiser



Our 2012 ceilidh: informal, energetic and fun.

Photo: Greg Parker

Rhoddie whacking and beaver tracking: Scone Palace residential

December 2012 – January 2013

It was an elite group (Mark, James and I) who left Edinburgh for the now-familiar Scone Palace to tackle the regal rhododendrons once again.

First stop was the supermarket where, knowing that we would be joined by several others over the course of the week, we piled our trolley higher and higher. This probably bemused our fellow-shoppers: what on earth were we stockpiling for?

We arrived at the Factor's House in plenty of time for me to prepare our evening meal, Mark to wipe down all the surfaces of the entire house and James to manhandle the electric radiators up the stairs.

First thing the next morning we met with the estate's Head Gardener Brian and he explained our task: to cut and burn an invasive patch of rhododendron from a wetland area. Being one of our favourite jobs this news was met with much enthusiasm.

Over the course of the next few days our numbers swelled as Trevor, Christine and Ian drove from Edinburgh on day trips, variously transporting Debbie, Edel, Alexandra, Greg Parker, Ian, Tony, Willie and David. Greg Milne, Tim and Maddy joined the three of us in the Factor's House.

While initially coping with horizontal sleet and uncooperative rhoddie, our spirits, and the weather, improved throughout the week and we relentlessly cleared the invader from the woodland. Morale was boosted by numerous tea breaks, warming fire-baked tatties one lunchtime and tit-bits from everybody's leftover Christmas sweets.

The Factor's House was at its busiest on Hogmanay night, and after another fine meal we enjoyed a lovely evening walk to the fire site while we awaited midnight.



Lunchtime! Tim busies himself with fire-baked tatties and the volcano kettle.

Photos: Mark Herron



Archway restored.

Photo: Greg Milne



Definitive beaver evidence.

Photo: Greg Milne

A tawny owl hooted as we indulged ourselves in the traditional pagan fire ritual of poking at the still-glowing embers for a bit, hopping around to keep warm and then finally admitting that we'd be more comfortable back inside, just in time for the bells.

Traditionally an LCV Day Off, January 1st dawned crisp, beautifully clear and sunny. We reacquainted ourselves with the pinetum and undertook a little light tree-measuring – now a seemingly regular occurrence for LCV at Scone. We were pleased to see that the restoration work to the historic archway, previously damaged by an errant white van (not ours, I hasten to add...) was complete, and impressive.

We then jumped into the van and drove into Perth as Tim—true to form—had A Plan. Our mission was to find evidence of beavers in the river Tay, an exciting prospect indeed. Things got off to an unpromising start. We drove into an industrial estate. We parked next to a factory. We listened to the moderate hum of the A9 traffic. Beavers near here? Surely not!



Finally convinced by Tim's claims.

Photo: Greg Milne

However, we quickly found a peaceful riverside walkway populated by dog-walkers and cyclists.

Although an attractive stroll, finding beavers seemed increasingly unlikely and our spirits sagged. But Mark's devotion to *Autumnwatch* paid off—he was the first to spot a pile of debarked twigs and he was able to assure us that this was typical beaver feeding behaviour. Sure enough, close inspection of the gleaming white sticks revealed obvious castorine tooth marks.



Apocalypse? No. The conclusion of another satisfying LCV task. *Photo: Mark Herron*

But that wasn't all—as we wandered along the river bank we began to spot signs of nibbling activity on several of the waterside trees. Finally, a most impressive apple-core-shaped tree trunk came into view. No doubt this time: beavers were definitely in residence. Moreover they were living in a stretch of river between trunk road and rail bridges just metres from a well-used public path. Comparing this environment to the utter tranquillity of SWT's Knapdale site we had visited during a Tynish residential was reassuring. Clearly they are adaptable creatures.

Refreshed, the rhoddie slaying continued apace the following day and by the end of the week the usual post-apocalyptic landscape of smouldering embers peopled by weary and aching volunteers marked the end of another LCV job well done.

Thanks go to Mark for leading and to James, Greg M, Tim and Maddy for cooking.

Sarah McConachie

How many conservation volunteers does it take to measure a tree? Part 3

Aim

You may recall our seemingly endless quest to measure the height of a giant sequoia tree in Scone Palace's stately pinetum. To recap, our sadly-missed friend Colin McLean had set us the task of calculating the height and girth of this magnificent specimen plant to mark its 150th birthday. He had chosen this tree because he had recorded the same measurements in 1970 while working at the palace for the Forestry Commission.

While girth was easily checked, our first attempt at height was foiled by Sarah McC measuring the wrong tree. We tried again in the summer: this time our methods gave widely differing results. So could we finally nail the job?

Methodology

Previously this had involved lying on the ground in the mud, holding various sticks aloft and much pacing, stroking of chins and solemnly striding out with industrial tape measures. But this time we had technology on our side because Greg M had downloaded a clinometer onto his iPad. This allowed us to note the angle from his eye to the treetop and use trigonometry (remember that?) to measure the tree's height. Twenty minutes later and we were done. Simple!

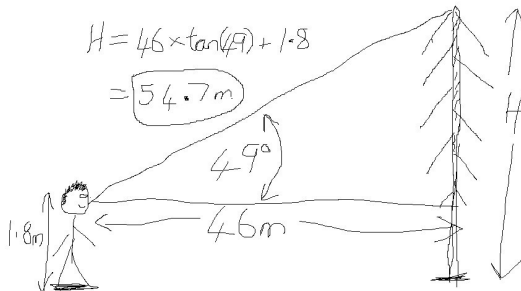


Clinometer in action.
Photo: Sarah McConachie



Mark measures while Tim, Maddy and Greg supervise. Photo: Sarah McConachie

Results



Extract from Greg Milne's detailed field notes. Clinometer or extraordinary trigonometrical-nasal-beam superpowers?

Year	Girth	Height
1970	8m 13cm	35m
2012	10m 29cm	41m – Sarah McC's muddy puddle method 54m – Colin's method, performed by Greg M
2013		54.7m – clinometer method, performed by Greg M

Conclusion

Since 1970 our tree has increased by approximately 2m 16cm in girth and 19m in height.

It takes eleven conservation volunteers (Greg M, Christine, Keith, Tim, Maddy, Willie, Ken, Sarah H, Mark, Nicola M and Sarah McC), two sticks, one measuring tape, one iPad, lots of concentration, quite a bit of skyward pointing, some bloody-minded perseverance, one calculator and several chocolate biscuits to measure a tree.

This study was limited by Sarah McConachie's questionable abilities as a field researcher. Her grant funding has been duly withdrawn.

Conflicts of interest

The researchers are extremely partial to chocolate biscuits.

Sarah McConachie

Tree-felling courses, Spring 2013

Course background

Since taking over as Co-ordinator I had been keen for LCV to run a tree-felling course, given that our last one had been the best part of ten years ago. Like most ideas, this was easier to imagine than to implement and it wasn't until last spring—when we realised that none of our volunteers had been formally trained to use our winch—that we developed our plans for a combined felling and winch-safety training day in earnest.

Spring and summer are not ideal times for such a course as rising sap makes the trees heavier, which can be a safety issue. Also, seasonal abundance means that flora and fauna are more likely to be damaged by felling operations. Happily, this enabled us to spend a few months identifying a trainer and seeking sources of funding. LCV's Training Officer, Peter Gilbert, recruited Sam Purkis—a suitably skilled Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) colleague of his—as our trainer. He then sought to gauge the level of interest in the course from within LCV's membership. An enthusiastic response quickly meant that one training date became two. Simon Bonsall, our Fundraising Officer, pulled together a funding application which secured payment from Sinclair Knight Merz's Corporate Social Responsibility scheme for both days and we were all set.

The site

Sam identified a suitable location for our course in Brock Wood near Spott, just south of Dunbar, which is a fairly new site for SWT. With a fine view of the Bass Rock it is predominantly mixed woodland with some small areas of open water and wet grassland. SWT are hoping to restore the wood to a native broadleaved condition by taking out the non-native trees. For now though, it hosts an impressive array of non-natives, enough to challenge even the most dedicated species spotter.



One of the felling teams: James, David N, Louisa, Edel, Sam, David J, Simon and Matt, who seems to be hiding. *Photo: Louisa Martin*

The wood has been left unmanaged for many years, with the result that all varieties of tree tend to be tall and spindly and compete with each other for light. By removing the non-native growth it is hoped that the native trees will prosper leading to a richer understory and an improved mix of woodland species. Interestingly, on the day we were there the SWT team had spotted their first signs of badger activity in the wood, which had been looking brock-free up to then.

The training course

The group set off from St Andrew Square bang on time and headed for the A.I. It's a fair distance to Brock Wood, but the drive was very straightforward and we didn't have any trouble meeting up with Sam and his volunteer colleague, Rachel. Following a run-down of the general health and safety points to be noted on the site (nothing too scary, just some steep and slippery slopes) and a reminder of all of the tree-felling health and safety information to keep in mind, we assembled around the first tree for a full run through of how to fell. This was revision for most of us but we did discover that the first felling notch doesn't need to be as deep as most of us thought, so long as it is amply wide. Another useful tip was that it's better to



Suitably notched.
Photo: Louisa Martin



Willie, Peter and Laura take notes.
Photo: Nicola Robson



The winch training in progress...

Photos: Louisa Martin



...ideal for 'hung-up' trees.

make the angled cut, rather than the horizontal cut first, if you don't want your notch to end up overly large.

Sam carefully felled his demonstration tree so that it was as hung up as possible and then we looked at ways to release it using tree levers, spare poles, or just a bit of gentle persuasion. After this we were all quite happy to get stuck in and Sam sent us off to hang up as many trees as possible so that we could practice getting them down. This, we remarked, looking around us, should not present a problem. Nor indeed did it, with all of us soon suspending and then successfully felling a few trees of our own.

I did have one comedy moment. I'd sawn through my tree to a point where I thought it should be happy to fall over just where I wanted it, but couldn't seem to persuade it to take the final plunge. I was pondering this situation while Matt came over to have a look. He gave the tree a tiny shove and over it went just perfectly. I was pleased. Matt was disappointed that he hadn't known that one finger was all he required to fell a tree! By now we were all getting pretty hungry so we stopped for a well-deserved lunch.



Safe and effective winch-use.

Photos: Louisa Martin



The need for a Bawsinch bridge replacement.

After lunch the winch training began, with Sam showing us all how to assemble and use this piece of kit safely and effectively. Once we'd all had a shot we went back to the main business of the day: hanging up trees left, right and centre. Now though, we were able to experiment with using the winch to release them, whether they needed it or not.

The light started to fail at about five o'clock so we packed up and journeyed back to town to digest all of our new-found knowledge, pleased to hear that some of our felled trees would be used to replace the 'interesting' bridges at Bawsinch.

Louisa Martin

Bogs, Bracken and Beavers: Kilmartin Summer Residential August 2013

LCV's previous weekend trips to west Argyll volunteering with SNH around their local reserves have always been popular, even in midwinter conditions. So it was no surprise that nine of us were keen to sign up for a week-long summer task at the end of July. Whether it is the stunning remote scenery, the variety of interesting conservation tasks undertaken, the enthusiasm of the rangers or simply the deluxe (en-suite!) accommodation provided in the Kilmartin bothy: we keep coming back for more.

Predictably we arrived a fortnight after the long hot summer had broken, so our first day, which was spent removing invading birch and spruce from the massive Moine Mhor raised bog, allowed us to re-experience the challenges of west-coast rain squalls. Even the smaller 'half' of the Great Moss, lying north of River Add, dwarfs Edinburgh's own Red Moss. After a long hard day fighting our way over the broken terrain, inevitably topping our wellies in hidden drainage ditches, we were glad to get back for hot showers and the usual fine communal dining. Although we have often been colder and wetter working here, I suspect most of us were looking forward to a more relaxing second day out. If only...

So day two was back on the bog for more of the same, only in fine sunny weather



North (arrow) and south sides of Moine Mhor from the ancient fort of Dunadd.

Photos: Louisa Martin



Tony gets stuck in.

Photos: Sarah McConachie



Lunch on the bog.

with a midge-repelling gentle breeze: heaven. We positively skipped along trying to finish the northern section so we wouldn't have to return for a third day. If only...

But the good weather allowed us to enjoy more of the wildlife and the SNH rangers Doug, Gordon and David were running to and fro photographing every caterpillar and bug we found. We saw hen harriers, dragon flies, an adder—well, just the skin—and one of Britain's weirdest caterpillars, the vapourer. Being relatively clean and happy at the end of the day, we were able to squeeze in a pre-dinner visit to the beaver trial's visitor centre at Barnluasgan in Knapdale, where we were booked on a ninety-minute guided walk around to Loch Coille-Bharr. Most of us had been there before, so weren't surprised that although we saw plenty of evidence of beavers, they weren't willing to come out and put on a show for a group of thirty-odd noisy tourists. However, we did get a top tip for later in the week....

No-one suggested working through Wednesday, our rest day, so we headed up to Oban and across to the Isle of Kerrera for a day trip. Whilst we weren't tempted into the icy sea for a dip, the island has everything for a perfect summer excursion



Sundew (left) and cranberries (right) on the colourful sphagnum moss.

Photos: Sarah McConachie



Louisa (left) and Debbie (right) cheerily tackle the bracken.

Photos: Sarah McConachie

i.e. an imposing ruined castle, a quaint tea room and wonderful geology (apparently). If we had looked at a real map rather than the cartoon on a free leaflet we might have planned a less ambitious walk, but at least it gave us an appetite for our tea out in the Kilmartin Hotel that evening.

Ranger Doug made himself very popular on Thursday by taking us down to Taynish NNR and setting us loose on a vast expanse of dense, head-high bracken, armed with slashers, grass hooks, scythes and adrenaline. This ungrazed ridge (cnap) down the centre of the Taynish oak forest is over-run by bracken, crowding out the possibility of trees regenerating or a flower meadow developing. By the end of the day nine LCV-ers, two rangers and three local regular volunteers had managed to completely knock back a significant swathe of the plant - but it did seem a drop in the ocean.

Inevitably Friday saw us back on the moss for one last push to finish the northern section. Again the weather was fine and we were further encouraged by the promise of some minor birch brashing and clearance in the afternoon. Visitor paths



Leisure time: Kerrera's ancient geological features (left) and a breezy Dunadd fort ascent (right.)

Photos: Sarah McConachie

from the Tileworks car park lead to a boardwalk and pond viewing platform, and clearing the scrubby birch along the path edge allows visitors a better view across Moine Mhor. As the weather was drawing in, and we didn't fancy getting soaked on our last afternoon, we packed up sharp, leaving us plenty of time to scale the small but impressive hill fort of Dunadd. From here we could see the true extent of Moine Mhor.

With all our duties done and everyone showered and fed, we had one last outing planned, to visit the beaver lodge on Loch Buic where we were promised a high probability of eventually seeing the elusive creatures. The large unruly pile of timber on top of the lodge is clearly visible opposite a small boat jetty. Amazingly, this time we weren't disappointed and had several good sightings of a beaver swimming slowly around the loch as twilight fell. The bats, frogs and even a newt that we came across on our walk back to the bus, added to the evening's success.

Packing up and driving back to Edinburgh on Saturday morning was less frantic than usual on a weekend task, and we were hoping to stop off at a couple of interesting nature spots on the way back east. However the weather turned foul just as we pulled in to Ardkinglas Woodland Garden, so we gave it a miss and headed home.

Thanks to everyone for their hard work over the week, especially as it was one of the more strenuous tasks LCV has been on for some time, and thanks to everyone for chipping in with the cooking, cleaning, driving and leading that is so essential to having a successful trip. And thanks once more to our hosts at SNH who always provide us with worthwhile and challenging tasks. *[Thanks also to Trevor for leading—Ed.]*

Trevor Paterson



Resi recipe



Would you like to cook on a residential but have never catered for ten hungry mouths before? If so, then look no further than our website where we have published lots of tried-and-tested ideas for vegetarian main courses and puddings. All of these are easy to make with—at times—limited kitchen facilities. And remember, catering for ten means you have nine assistants to help with the preparation! Here's a tasty snack suggestion to get you started:

Sharon Brownjohn's banana oat bites

When served in horizontal sleet with LCV tea and coffee, these wholesome treats enliven the weariest of volunteers. They also made a welcome appearance at the 2012 ceilidh. Makes 12 – 16 portions.

Ingredients

70g porridge oats
40g oatbran
110g caster sugar
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
100g sultanas
2 egg whites
225g mashed bananas
4 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Ground cinnamon

Method

Preheat oven to 180°C.

Mix dry ingredients together in a bowl.

In a separate bowl, mix together mashed bananas, milk, egg whites and vanilla extract.

Combine all ingredients and beat together well.

Lightly grease and line a 8.5 inch baking tin and pour in the mixture.

Bake for 35 minutes.

Sprinkle with cinnamon when cool and cut into bite sized pieces.

Review of the year

This is a shortened version of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2012 – 2013. A full version of this is available on our Yahoo newsgroup—see back page for details—or upon request.

Work carried out

In the year to the end of March 2013, LCV ran 65 tasks for 14 different clients at 22 different sites. In total, we did 750 days of voluntary work (2012: 716, 2011: 684, 2010: 621) for conservation projects in Scotland. We had an average of 11.5 volunteers on each task (2012: 11.4, 2011: 10.2, 2010: 10.8). The Scottish Wildlife Trust and Midlothian Council were our two biggest clients receiving 149 and 129 of our total workdays respectively (2012: 140, 163). Our summer and New Year residential tasks this year were at Scone Palace.

Minibus

LCV runs a minibus that is used to transport tools and volunteers to the work sites. The minibus is used exclusively for the purposes of the group and this year it was driven 3,408 miles (2012: 3,399) on task. The minibus is vital for our operation: it allows us to welcome volunteers who do not have their own transport and gives us the means to transport bulky tools safely. We plan to replace this bus with a new one in 2019.

Tool store and garage

LCV owns a wide variety of tools. One of the strengths of the group is that we can provide the client with volunteers who are fully equipped for the task. This year has seen a continued investment in new tools and safety equipment to ensure that our volunteers have everything they need to do an excellent job. We also carried out repairs to the communal access track leading to our buildings. The cost of this was recovered from other users of this track. We have not made any other significant investments in our buildings this year.

Training

LCV aims to provide the training volunteers need to undertake tasks safely and in a skilled fashion. During the year we have carried out two tree felling training courses enabling 15 volunteers to gain enhanced skills in safe felling techniques. These courses were funded by Sinclair Knight Merz. One volunteer completed D1 minibus training. This training was mainly funded by Sinclair Knight Merz, with the balance coming from LCV.

Publicity and volunteer recruitment

A total of 64 new volunteers (2012: 71) came on their first task with us during the year. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of new volunteers find out about LCV from our website, which during the year received 7,587 unique visitors with 861 in March 2013 alone. In the previous year we recorded 9,844 visits to the site but the launch of a new website and change in the method of collecting the

figures mean that these numbers are not directly comparable. We also attract a significant number of volunteers from the Edinburgh Volunteer Centre, by word of mouth and by our attendance at local volunteer fairs.

Volunteer retention

Of the 64 new volunteers who came out in the past year 20 returned for a subsequent task. This number is close to the long term average for the past eight years which is 22. Eight came out on at least four tasks suggesting that they are becoming established within the group. This is equal to the long term average.

A new volunteer survey was launched during the year to collect feedback from volunteers after their first task. 24 new volunteers were offered the chance to respond to this, and two did so, a response rate of 8%. The two responses received were positive but the sample size is too small to allow any conclusions to be drawn.

Volunteer development

LCV had 16 active task leaders and drivers in the last year, with 12 active task leaders and eight active drivers (some volunteers do both). The long term average is 13 active leaders (1995/96 to 2012/13) and 10 active drivers (2004/05 to 2012/13). However, excluding task leaders and drivers whose contribution was to one task only (who therefore do not have much impact on the workload shared by the most active contributors) the 2012/13 figures were 11 and eight in comparison to long term averages of nine and nine. We are therefore above the long term average for task leaders, and close to it for drivers. LCV prefers to avoid asking the same individual to lead or drive more than one task a month. Though the spread of responsibility is quite good overall, in the last year three individuals have exceeded the 12 task level. LCV would therefore still like to recruit more leaders and drivers, especially drivers.

Tree nursery

LCV runs a tree nursery in which we grow native trees of known provenance. Our Tree Nursery Manager plans the planting in the nursery in consultation with our clients to enable us to provide trees that they require. Being able to provide quality trees of known provenance is important for tree planting projects.

It can take up to four years to grow a tree from seed to a size that is suitable for planting on a reserve and so the Tree Nursery represents a considerable investment of volunteer time and effort. We are grateful to the City of Edinburgh Council for providing us with a site for our tree nursery.

Conclusion

It has been, as always, a busy year for the group with our total volunteer days at, if not above, their highest ever value. We have again run a wide variety of tasks to maintain the enthusiasm of both long-standing and new volunteers and our residential tasks have been popular and well-attended. Recruitment of leaders, drivers and new committee members continues to be our biggest challenge in the year ahead as well as retaining new volunteers. The committee will continue to plan ahead to ensure that there is a supply of volunteers willing to take on senior roles in the group as they become vacant by identifying likely candidates at an early stage.

Noticeboard



Leading tasks and driving for LCV

We are always looking for new volunteers to lead tasks. There is a description of how to lead a task on the LCV website—look under ‘how to’—and training courses are run from time to time. Normally an experienced leader would be around as backup for the first few tasks. If you might be interested in leading tasks for LCV, please get in touch with Partha our Leader/Driver organiser—contact details overleaf. Minibus drivers are also needed. If you are a relatively experienced driver the first step is to get in touch with Willie our Minibus Officer—contact details overleaf. Our aim is that all LCV drivers will also receive MiDAS training, which involves theoretical and practical aspects of safe driving. We can also arrange DI training for those who need it.

LCV clothing

Image Scotland is a company based in Musselburgh that supplies a good range of branded outdoor clothing. See www.imagescotland.com for their catalogue. They have a large green screen printed version of the LCV logo on their database that works well on anything from T-shirts to high visibility jackets, along with a smaller multicoloured embroidery version that is better for fleeces, hats etc. Contact Nicola Robson our Membership Secretary—contact details overleaf—if you would like to purchase a garment branded with the LCV logo for your outdoor activities.

Paper copy *Puggled Mucker* and *Annual Review* subscriptions

If you would like to receive a paper copy of the quarterly *Puggled Mucker* newsletter and our *Annual Review* the cost to cover printing and postage is £4 per year. Please send a cheque payable to ‘Lothians Conservation Volunteers’ to Nicola Robson, who will advise you of her address when you call her—number overleaf. Let her know if your contact details change.

LCV Online

Don’t forget that you can check the task and social programme online at www.lcv.org.uk. The website is a mine of useful information for leading tasks, working the kettle and catering for large groups on residential.

Keep up with LCV news

Join our Yahoo! online discussion group, where we publish LCV news, discussions about LCV activities and social events. To subscribe contact David Nutter, LCV Webmaster—contact details overleaf.

Lcv Contacts

Louisa Martin

David Monaghan

Matt McCabe

Debbie Tribak

Nicola Robson

Partha Lal

Martin Brownjohn

Rachael Taggart

Tony Irving

Simon Bonsall

David Nutter

William McSporran

Peter Gilbert

Trevor Paterson

Sarah McConachie

Newsgroup

To join our newsgroup send an email to webmaster@lcv.org.uk.

Full details at www.lcv.org.uk

Co-ordinator

coordinator@lcv.org.uk

Treasurer

treasurer@lcv.org.uk

Task Organiser

tasks@lcv.org.uk

Transport Secretary

0131 337 0223

Membership Secretary

membership@lcv.org.uk

Leader/Driver Organiser

logistics@lcv.org.uk

Publicity Officer

publicity@lcv.org.uk

Social Organiser

social@lcv.org.uk

Tree Nursery

Fundraiser

fundraising@lcv.org.uk

Webmaster

webmaster@lcv.org.uk

Minibus Officer

Training Organiser

Tools Officer

Newsletter Editor

mucker@lcv.org.uk

