

Lothians Conservation Volunteers

In support of the Scottish Wildlife Trust

puggled mucker

Spring 2009
Issue 145



Inside:

Task programme	3
How to book & what to bring	8
LCV news	10
Social events	12
Views	14
Contact details	19



**Lothians
Conservation
Volunteers**

www.lcv.org.uk

This will be my last *Co-ordinator's Comments* as I intend to stand down at the next AGM. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the members of the committee and the leaders and drivers for their hard work during my time as Co-ordinator. These last 4 years have passed very quickly and I have had great fun with the group during that time. I hope you have too!

The introduction of Saturday tasks since September 2008 has proved a success. While generally not quite as well attended as Sunday tasks they are still popular and there is more than enough work for us to do. The committee has therefore decided to continue including these in our future programmes.

Our AGM will be held on Tuesday 12 May, when a new LCV Committee will be elected. The opportunity to take part in regular LCV tasks is dependent on careful organisation and planning by fellow volunteers working behind the scenes. The future of LCV depends on the goodwill of its members and their ongoing help with the smooth running of the group. If you would like to become more involved please contact me and let me know what you can do.

Sarah Humphreys—Co-ordinator



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 thirty years.

We are affiliated to BTCV, the UK conservation volunteering charity. 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

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The Editor Writes...

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the *Mucker* this spring. My apologies are due for the slight delay in getting this issue to your doorstep.

Spring seems to have come around very quickly and Matt has worked hard to put together a varied set of tasks to take us through to the summer. There is just one unconfirmed task in April and details will be posted on the LCV website as they become available.

Ken has provided a winter residential review; for an insight into LCV's activities at Pease Dean over New Year see page 14. Edel has agreed to share a recipe on page 17 for those of you keen to expand your catering repertoire.

This is your newsletter, and contributions from all LCV members are welcome. Most formats can be accommodated—handwritten, drawn, photographed, electronic. Just get in touch with me by 25 May if you have something you'd like to see included in the next edition.

Nicola Murray

Task Programme

March 29

**Leadburn Community Woodland:
tree thinning/planting**

Leadburn Community Woodland was recently purchased from the Forestry Commission by a small group of individuals known as the Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland. The group intend to replace the previous plantation of conifers with native trees such as silver birch, ash, oak and rowan, among others, and planting at the site has recently begun. On this visit we will be helping to thin and plant trees. The area is boggy in places, so wellies are recommended if you have them.



April 5

location & task to be confirmed

When information is available on this task we will post it on the LCV website at www.lcv.org.uk and Debbie the Transport Secretary will have details.

April 11–12

Easter weekend—no task

April 18 SATURDAY

Pishwanton: task to be confirmed

This 60 acre site is located 2 miles south of Gifford, near Haddington in East Lothian. The Life Science Trust was established in 1992 to research, teach and promote education methods that enable people to rediscover connections with the natural world and develop a partnership with their environment. It purchased the woods in 1996 and the site sits at 700 ft on the edge of the Lammermuir Hills. Occupation of the area dates back to prehistoric times and there is a large Iron Age burial mound. Research and teaching is carried out on a wide variety of topics—medicinal plant study, herb growing, land and craft skills and ecological building methods to name a few. On previous tasks, LCV has planted trees and cut gorse for weaving into a fence. For up-to-date information on the nature of this task please consult the LCV website at www.lcv.org.uk. This site can be wet so wellies are strongly recommended if you have them!

April 19

Roslin Glen: path/step work

Roslin Glen is a 19ha reserve to the east of Roslin village and on the south bank of the River North Esk in Midlothian. The site is leased and managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is a relatively undisturbed, mixed deciduous woodland largely made up of native sessile oak, wych-elm and ash, with a shrub layer of hazel and holly. There are also some introduced sycamore, beech and Norway spruce trees which are gradually being removed. The area boasts a rich woodland flora which includes dog's mercury, damsons, wood-rush and various ferns. Dippers and kingfishers can be seen in the fairly clean waters of the Esk. The area has been put under a Millennium Forest for Scotland grant scheme to return the woodland to a native mixture of trees such as ash, alder, oak, pine and birch. On this task we will improving access by working on steps and paths in the glen.

April 26

Wooplaw Wood: pathwork/beechn removal

Located on a minor road between Stow and Galashiels, this 40 hectare woodland was acquired in 1988 by Borders Community Woodland. Originally a badly neglected mature conifer woodland and bare land, the site now includes a small pond, birch thickets, a drystone dyke and areas of recently-planted broad-leaved trees. The local community are actively involved with the development of the wood and have built a log cabin, complete with stove. On previous visits LCV has thinned trees to prevent overcrowding, planted trees around a small pond and upgraded a small wooden bridge crossing the Allen water, using local materials. On this visit to the site we will be working on path development within the site and removing invasive beech.

May 2 SATURDAY

Vogrie: pathwork

Vogrie is a popular country park four kilometres south-east of Dalkeith run by Midlothian Council. About half the area is covered by woodland and scrub, with smaller patches of grassland, three ponds, an alder coppice and a conifer plantation. Over the years we have carried out a variety of tasks, including clearing the ponds and sections of the River Tyne, cutting some of the grass on the meadow, repairing part of a drystone dyke, clearing scrub, coppicing alder and planting trees. On this task, we will be helping to improve access by carrying out pathwork in the park.

May 3

Gullane: sea buckthorn clearance

Gullane Links are part of the beautiful and dramatic coastal scenery in East Lothian, which includes sand dunes, mudflats, sandy beaches, rocky headlands, steep cliffs and a scattering of small islands. Gullane Bay is about two miles north-east of Aberlady and is one of the finest and most popular sandy beaches within easy reach of Edinburgh. We will be working with the East Lothian Council Ranger Service to clear sea buckthorn. This will allow marram grass to spread and continue to hold the sand in place. Clearing the buckthorn will also help keep the path clear for the public, so they are less likely to wander and damage the dune system. The plant is very prickly so hard-wearing clothes are advisable.

May 10

Dalkeith Country Park: stepwork

This is a large country park on the outskirts of Dalkeith, forming part of the extensive Buccleuch Estates. The estate evolved around Dalkeith House, which was built around 1700, as a large pleasure garden. Today, the semi-natural woodland within the park is home to deer, foxes and a myriad of small birds, animals and insects. In the past we have worked with the Ranger, Cameron Manson, clearing and burning rhododendron and cutting back vegetation. On this visit, we will be helping to improve access by working on steps in the park.



May 17

Beebraigs Country Park: pathwork

Beebraigs Country Park is near Linlithgow and is run by West Lothian Council. It is a fairly large park dominated by a conifer plantation. There is also a loch, a deer farm, a trout farm and small areas set aside for camping and recreation. LCV has done a variety of tasks here, including tree planting and coppicing, dry-stane dyking, footpath work, boardwalk construction, bridge building and step building. On this occasion, we will be carrying out pathwork to improve access.

May 24

Beeccraigs Country Park: pathwork

This task will be a continuation of the work begun on May 17.

May 31

Gullane: pirri pirri burr clearance

See May 3 for a description of this site. Pirri pirri burr is a low growing, ever-green perennial native to New Zealand. The plant has become invasive along parts of the East Lothian coastline, where it outcompetes native grasses on the dune system. On this task we will be helping the East Lothian Rangers remove pirri pirri burr.

June 7

Easter Craiglockhart Hill: meadow raking

Easter Craiglockhart Hill is above Craiglockhart Sports Centre and is one of Edinburgh's seven hills offering excellent views across the city towards the castle and Arthur's Seat. The area is owned jointly by the City of Edinburgh Council and Napier University. We will be working with the Friends of Craiglockhart Nature Trail—a local group supported by the Scottish Wildlife Trust—who have produced a management plan and a trail leaflet, and continue to manage the site for wildlife. In the past on this site LCV has put in log steps, improved the foot-path, cleared Japanese knotweed and built a nesting platform for mute swans. On this visit we will be raking up trimmed grass to continue the development of a wildflower meadow.

June 13 SATURDAY

Vogrie: bird-box construction

For site description see May 2. On this visit, we will be helping with the construction and erection of bird boxes.

June 14

Beeccraigs Country Park: pathwork

This task will be a continuation of the work begun on May 17.

June 21

LCV Tool shed: tool maintenance

Over the years LCV has built up a large collection of hand-tools for conservation work, which are in use almost all year round. Consequently, they need

regular maintenance in order to prolong their useful life and keep them safe to use. This is an opportunity to learn how to clean and oil tools, sharpen blunt blades and make repairs. There will be no need for us to use the minibus for this task—we will all simply meet at the tool shed at 10am. Please contact Ken Humphreys if you need further directions.

June 28 Leadburn Community Woodland: tree clearance

See March 29 for a description of this site. On this visit we will be clearing trees. The area is boggy in places, so wellies are recommended if you have them. LCV members have kindly been invited to a BBQ after this task and those on task will automatically be involved. Due to the post task BBQ the minibus will return to Edinburgh later in the evening than usual.



July 3 – 11 Isle of Lewis Residential: TBC

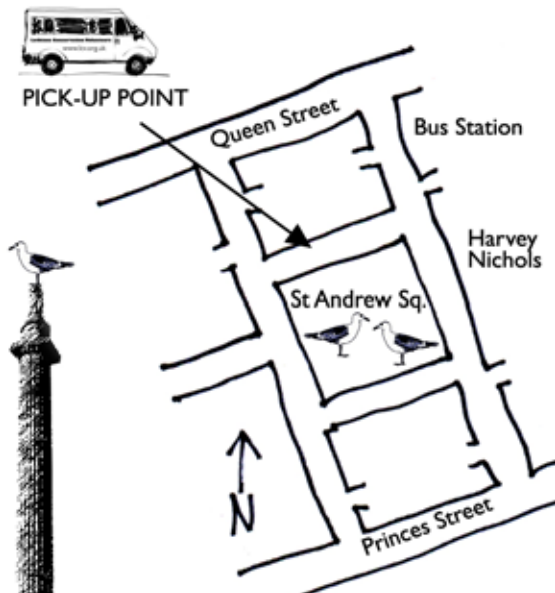
Aline Community Woodland is owned by the Erisort Trust, a local community group on Lewis. It was purchased by the trust with funding support from the Scottish Land Fund. It is one of the rare extensive woodland areas on the island and is situated by Loch Seaforth between Stornoway and Tarbert.

The Erisort Trust aims to promote sustainable development of the woodland and create local opportunities by providing a unique mix of educational and recreational facilities. With the woodland rich in flora and fauna they hope to provide a place where there is something for everyone to enjoy at any time of the year.

This residential task, yet to be confirmed in detail, may involve pathlaying and boardwalk construction to improve access within the site. Accommodation will be in the local youth hostel, details to follow. Please check the LCV website at www.lcv.org.uk for updates on this residential.

How to book and what to bring

Day tasks



We meet on the north side of St. Andrew Square at 9.30 a.m. prompt—look out for our yellow minibus. We normally aim to return around 5.30 p.m. Bring waterproofs, a packed lunch and boots or wellies—steel toe-cap wear is recommended. If you have your own work gloves, you might want to bring them, though we do have gloves that anyone can borrow. On hot sunny days you will get thirsty so bring plenty of drinking water—1.5 to 2 litres is recommended. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided.

Transport is free, but please phone Debbie, the Transport Secretary, by the Friday evening before the task if you are coming—this is so that we know how many tools to take, whether there's room in the minibus and so that we don't go without you. Tasks are very popular, so you're advised to book early. We also only have 12 seats in the bus, so please come if you've booked, or someone else might miss out. If the bus is full, or it's easier for you, you can of course meet us at the site of the task, but again please inform the Transport Secretary, so we can let you know the meeting point and also when we expect to arrive.

We don't cancel the task if it's raining.

Residential Tasks

Residentials are great fun—see the Pease Dean review on page 14—and they allow LCV to undertake larger tasks further from Edinburgh. They involve a weekend away to work on the Saturday and Sunday. We leave on Friday night and usually take in a chip shop on the way. We get back to Edinburgh on Sunday evening.

Regardless of the time of year, bring a complete change of clothing so that you can get out of your work clothes in the evening. Remember that the weather can be very changeable, so bring a warm jumper and hat and above all don't forget a waterproof jacket and trousers and sturdy footwear. In the summer a sturdy bottle for drinking water is recommended. Unless otherwise indicated you'll probably need to take a sleeping bag and, if sleeping on the floor, a Karimat or air-bed.

On residential tasks, breakfasts, lunches and the evening meal are organised by a volunteer. Everyone helps to prepare the food. The fare is usually vegetarian and there is plenty of it. Food for a weekend usually works out at £6 – 7 each. Pick-up is from St. Andrew Square at 7.30 p.m. on Friday, unless otherwise stated. If you want to go on a residential task, please book with the Transport Secretary. Normally, bookings will be accepted for weekend residential tasks up to the preceding Wednesday evening.

Before you come on any task with us, please make sure that your tetanus vaccination is up to date.

Monthly meetings

Every second Tuesday of the month, we have a meeting at 16 Forth Street, off Broughton Street, at 7.30 p.m. We leave a notice near the door with a mobile number to call so we can let you in. You are welcome to join us while we discuss LCV business. We often go for a drink in a local pub after the meeting.



News

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 for backup for the first few tasks. Minibus drivers are also needed—if you are a relatively experienced driver, the first step is to do an LCV familiarisation session with the minibus to see how you get on. Our aim is that all LCV drivers will also receive MiDAS training, which involves theoretical and practical aspects of safe driving. If you might be interested in either leading tasks or driving for LCV, please contact Sarah Humphreys.



LCV clothing

Our range includes LCV tops (S, M, L, XL sizes in deep navy or khaki with the LCV logo on) and fleece neckwarmers with drawstrings, so they also double as hats (one-size in charcoal). Costs are: £25 for a hooded sweatshirt, £20 for a sweatshirt, £12 for a T-Shirt and £7 for a neckwarmer. If you're interested in adding to your wardrobe, please send your order to Pauline Jones—address inside the back cover of the Mucker—noting the item, size and colour. We need payment with your order: please make cheques payable to ‘Lothians Conservation Volunteers’.

Newsletter subscriptions

If you would like to receive the *Puggled Mucker* newsletter, the cost to cover printing and postage is £4 per year (£2 unwaged). Please send a cheque to ‘Lothians Conservation Volunteers’ to Pauline Jones—address inside the back cover—and 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 residentials.

Keep up with LCV news

Join our Yahoo! online discussion group, where we publish LCV news, discussions about LCV activities and social events. If you want to subscribe contact the LCV treasurer David Monaghan—contact details see www.lcv.org.uk.



They were all finding the annual Easter Egg Hunt more challenging than usual.

Social Events

For all events it is better to book beforehand by emailing either Alexandra or Emma, social convenors giving your contact details, this way you can be updated if there is a change in arrangements. But, if you are not sure what you're doing until the last minute, for most events it is possible to just turn up. Updates on social events are sometimes circulated on *LCV News* our online newsgroup, see page 11 for details.

Tue 28 April

Pub Quiz at Greyfriars Bobby Pub

Join LCV in Greyfriars Bobby bar at 8 p.m.—quiz starts at 9 p.m. Greyfriars Bobby is at 30 – 34 Candlemaker Row, Old Town, Edinburgh. Please contact Alexandra or Emma if you would like to join the LCV team, so that we know our numbers. If you want to surprise us on the night, then just turn up at the pub at 7.30 p.m.



Tue 5 May

West Side Story at the Festival Theatre

Come along to see the musical *West Side Story*. It has won two *whatsonstage.com* awards and more information can be found at:

www.eft.co.uk/festival_theatre/event.aspx?evtid=158

Tickets cost £21.50. You are required to pay in advance for this event.

If we have enough people Emma will purchase the group rate tickets. Refunds of any monies will then be given back on the night. Performance starts at 7.30 p.m. Meet Emma in the ground floor bar from 7p.m. to collect your ticket.



Wed 10 June

Evening Walk

Enjoy yourself on an evening walk up Arthur's Seat, to take in the glorious views around Edinburgh. Meet Emma at 7 p.m. outside the main entrance to the Scottish Parliament. We will finish the evening with coffees and drinks at the Tun Bar, for those who are in need of refreshment.

Wed 24 June

The Stand Comedy Club

Join LCV for a comedy night at The Stand, 5 York Place. More details about this event to follow from Alexandra on the LCV online newsgroup—see page 11.

Sun 28 June

Leadburn Tree Clearance Post Task BBQ

LCV members have kindly been invited to a BBQ after the tree clearance task at Leadburn Community Woodland. Those on task will automatically be involved, but if anyone else would like to join our volunteers for the BBQ alone, then please email Emma to express an interest. She will then try and co-ordinate transport/lifts to Leadburn.



Views

Party at Pease Dean

Residential: Dec 29 - Jan 3

We boldly rode through a stuck red light to escape the traffic madness of Edinburgh. It was a cold night and warmth was to be had eating chips inside the Dunbar chip shop.

The following morning the minibus was white with frost but the clear sky augured well for a good day ahead. We were working at Tower Dean, which is cut across at the top by the A1 and lower down by the East Coast Main Line. The Dean is steep sided and cloaked mainly with densely packed sycamore which discourages diversity. Our task was to completely remove an area of these to allow re-planting with oak.

On the first day we were joined by Trevor, Tony and Debbie—the 'professional' team who now go nowhere without being tooled up with their own equipment. After splitting up into teams, we set about looking for suitable trees to fell. Julian of the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and his friend Fergus brought along their chainsaws to take out anything too big for us and to speed up the cutting of felled timber into logs.

Our main difficulty was the dense packing of the trees, resulting in felled trees easily getting hung up on those remaining standing. Use of ropes, levers and the excellent Lug-All winch were needed to bring these trees safely to ground. The stumps were left high for later treatment with arboricide. Once down, a hit squad would sned the side branches quicker than you could open a packet of biscuits for teatime.



Snedding felled sycamore

At the end of the day we said goodbye to the day-trippers and were thankful to get back into the warmth of the cottage and enjoy some food—appropriately an excellent curry to warm us up. There was a television but the fixture list was so poor we almost contemplated playing *Royalty*, one of the many available board games at our accommodation, a quiz about royal families. By popular demand we opted for some high-octane *Scrabble* instead.

The beauty with the second morning of a residential is that there is usually some pudding left over from the night before with which you can treat yourself for breakfast—in this case passion fruit trifle! This gave us the boost needed for a tough day's felling. It was New Year's Eve and after a full day's work and a delicious dinner we had time to kill before seeing in the New Year. Another little known board game saw us through; *Categories*, a quiz in which the most obscure answers win points. A few rounds of this followed by some of Jools Holland's *Hootenanny* took us to the bells and a toast to welcome in 2009.

On New Year's Day we drove up the coast to Dunbar and walked the John Muir Way coastal path back to Cockburnspath. The route begins at Dunbar's sandstone castle and fishing harbour. Further on through the golf links we stopped at



New Year's Day walk along the John Muir Way

Catcraig, an important geological site boasting nine different types of limestone. You could see the shapes of echinoids (sea urchins) in the rock. Lunch near a pool at Barns Ness gave the birdwatchers excellent views of redshank, dunlin and curlew.

Further around the coast at Torness, a flock of goosander were feeding. The path follows the seaward ramparts of the power station where information placards inform us that one quarter of Scotland's peak power demand is met by the Torness reactors. Fish and fishermen make use of the warmer water that is released back to sea after cooling the generators.



New Year's Day walk along the John Muir Way

Near Billsdean the sea cliffs rise dramatically, providing our cue to cut inland and back to the cottage for a warming haggis dinner.

Our final day's work saw Tony, Trevor and Jackie join us. The weather was fine and everyone set to the task with enthusiasm. It was such a good day that Harry Eadie of SWT came out to see our work despite recovering from flu.

We headed back to Edinburgh on a stunning bright morning. Snow could be seen on the distant Angus Mountains as we drove home up the A1. Thanks to Tim for leading, Sarah McConnachie for organising the food and everyone else for helping out, cooking and making the trip good fun. Thanks too to Harry, Fergus and Julian for their expert help and making us welcome at Tower Dean.

And thanks Ken for documenting the Pease Dean residential and Greg Milne for providing the photos—Ed.

Resi Recipe

Edel's Quick Apple Crumble—Serves ten with appetite.



Ingredients:

6 cooking apples (peeled, cored and sliced)
6 oz self-raising flour
9 oz soft brown sugar
9 oz margarine
9 oz porridge oats
1.5 level teaspoons salt
3 level teaspoons ground cinnamon
generous splash of lemon juice

Method:

- 1 Place the sliced apple in a greased oven tin/dish.
- 2 Melt the margarine in a saucepan and add it to the remaining ingredients in a bowl. Stir the mixture, then place it evenly over the apples.
- 3 Bake in a hot oven—Gas Mark 6/200°C—until nice and brown.
- 4 Will probably take about 30 mins to cook but this varies on the thickness of the apples and quality of the oven!

If you are willing to share your vegetarian culinary secrets send a recipe—for ten—to the Mucker editor and we'll pull one out of the pot for the next Mucker. Thanks to Edel for this one, a dish that was served during the recent New Year residential. Great for a cold winter's night where there's an oven available—Ed.

Task locations



LCV People

For email addresses see the website at www.lcv.org.uk.

Sarah Humphreys

Co-ordinator

David Monaghan

Treasurer

Matt McCabe

Task Organiser

Debbie Tribak

Transport Secretary

Pauline Jones

Membership Secretary

Louisa Martin

Leader/Driver Organiser

Sarah McConachie

Publicity

Alexandra Costello

Emma Brown

Social Organisers

Tony Irving

Tree Nursery

David Nutter

Fundraiser

William McSporran

Minibus

Peter Gilbert

Training Organiser

Ken Humphreys

Toolshed

Nicola Murray

Newsletter Editor

Conservation Tasks

March	Sun 29	Leadburn Community WoodInd.	Tree planting
April	Sun 5	TBC*	TBC
	11 – 12	Easter weekend	no task
	SAT 18	Pishwanton	TBC
	Sun 19	Roslin Glen	Path/step work
	Sun 26	Wooplaw wood	Pathwork/beechn removal
May	SAT 2	Vogrie	Pathwork
	Sun 3	Gullane	Sea buckthorn clearance
	Sun 10	Dalkeith Country Park	Stepwork
	Sun 17	Beebraigs Country Park	Pathwork
	Sun 24	Beebraigs Country Park	Pathwork
	Sun 31	Gullane	Pirri-pirri burr clearance
June	Sun 7	Easter Craiglockhart	Meadow raking
	SAT 13	Vogrie	Bird box construction
	Sun 14	Beebraigs Country Park	Pathwork
	Sun 21	LCV Tool shed	Tool maintenance
	Sun 28	Leadburn Community WoodInd.	Tree clearance
July	3 – 11	Isle of Lewis Residential	TBC



* to be confirmed (TBC) please see the LCV website at www.lcv.org.uk for updates or call Debbie the Transport Secretary for details.

Other Events

April	Tues 14	7.30 p.m.	Monthly Meeting
	Tues 28	7.30 p.m.	<i>Greyfriars Bobby</i> Pub quiz
May	Tues 5	7.00 p.m.	Festival Theatre <i>West Side Story</i>
	Tues 12	7.30 p.m.	Annual General Meeting
June	Tues 9	7.30 p.m.	Monthly Meeting
	Wed 10	7.00 p.m.	Evening walk up Arthur's Seat
	Wed 24	time TBC	<i>The Stand</i> comedy club
	Sun 28	time TBC	Leadburn post task BBQ
July	Tues 14	7.30 p.m.	Monthly Meeting

