

Lothians Conservation Volunteers

In support of the Scottish Wildlife Trust

puggled mucker

Autumn 2009

Issue 147



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**Lothians
Conservation
Volunteers**

What a busy three months it has been! The new committee is settling in nicely. Tasks and social events have been well attended. We've been to an excellent new site on Lewis for our summer residential and a good turnout for a tool shed task in June saw major improvements to our forecourt and garage door.

Fundraising for the new bus has been successful, bringing the question of what sort of bus to buy into sharp focus. Regrettably minibuses have not been immune to the creeping increases in vehicle size over the last few years. This means that a Ford Transit similar to our existing bus turns out to be the only choice as all the other available vehicles are too long, too high or both. Even the Ford comes uncomfortably close to being the same height as our garage door so the final decision is having to wait while we investigate some garage door modifications which might give us a bit more space to play with.

The three months ahead should hopefully see this sorted out and a new LCV van on the road. Other forthcoming highlights include the volunteer recruitment fair, the autumn residential at Carrifran, and LCV's popular annual fundraising ceilidh on 14 November when you can take your wellies off, put your dancing shoes on and bring your friends along for a good night out!

www.lcv.org.uk

Louisa Martin—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...

A squirrel is burying assorted snacks in the back green at Mucker HQ and a mouse was recently sighted sprinting past the editorial desk, sure signs that urban wildlife is preparing for winter. Matt has been busy with our autumn task list and has organised plenty to keep you occupied until January, including a Halloween residential in Carrifran—for details see page 5. We have been unable to secure a New Year residential this year so have put in a Saturday task during the festive period to provide you with an extra opportunity to get out and work off the mince pies.

Looking back at our summer activities, Lousia has provided a review of LCV's residential on the beautiful Isle of Lewis in June; see page 14 to learn more. Your intrepid editor recently made a night time foray into Bawsinch wildlife reserve; find out why on page 17. This quarter's celebrity chef is Sharon, who has kindly provided a delicious cut out and cater 'resi recipe' on page 20.

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue of the Mucker. 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 November if you have something you'd like to see included in the next edition.

Task Programme

September 13

**Currie High School:
burn clearance**

Currie High School is fortunate in having a burn and woodland in the school grounds. The burn rises at a spring and continues through a woodland gorge to join the Murray Burn. The burn is an excellent habitat for fresh water invertebrates and the woodland forms part of a wildlife corridor which now surrounds the school, following extensive planting by Edinburgh Urban Forest Project. Over the last 12 years, the burn has been cleared of rubbish except for the first section, which offers difficult access. On this occasion, we will be repeating our regular task of helping to clear the burn to enhance the amenity and to improve the marginal plant diversity. Please bring wellington boots if you have them, although they are not essential.

September 20

**Bawsinch:
path maintenance/weeding**

Bawsinch and Duddingston loch are found on the southern edge of Holyrood Park, just below Arthur's Seat and only three kilometres from the city centre. Formerly a derelict industrial site, Bawsinch is a triangular area next to the south shore of the loch. This 26 hectare reserve, partly owned and managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), is a bird sanctuary and has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The area boasts breeding and wintering wildfowl, marshland with reedbeds and willow, patches of scrub and woodland, some freshwater ponds and an area of grassland named Goose Green. In the past LCV has felled trees, cleared ponds, built log bridges and cleared invasive vegetation. On this task, under the guidance of Colin McLean from SWT, we will be clearing vegetation to keep footpaths open.

September 27

**Aberlady Bay:
sea buckthorn clearance**

Situated on the coast, Aberlady Bay is a Local Nature Reserve owned and managed by East Lothian Council. It is a large area—580 hectares—made up of an open bay with sand and mudflats, as well as expanses of saltings, dunes and grassland. The area is best known for its birds, where over 200 species have been seen. There is also considerable botanical interest—you can see the full plant succession from mudflat to saltmarsh, to dune scrub and grassland. On this task, we will be clearing areas of invasive sea buckthorn. Sea buckthorn is quite prickly, so hard-wearing clothes are advisable.

October 3 SATURDAY

Vogrie: pond clearance/weeding

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 cleared the ponds, cut meadow grass, repaired part of a drystone dyke, cleared scrub, coppiced alder and planted trees. On this visit we'll be clearing vegetation in and around the ponds. This will help to maintain a balance between open water and vegetation, in order to improve aquatic biodiversity. Please bring wellington boots if you have them, although they are not essential as LCV has a selection of waders.

October 4



Addiewell Bing: tree felling

Addiewell Bing is a long, narrow reserve of 21 hectares just south of Bathgate in West Lothian, which is leased and managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT). It is an excellent example of how a derelict industrial site—part of the oil shale industry—can be converted into an important wildlife refuge.

Most of the reserve is covered by woodland and scrub, but there are also patches of bracken, heather, open grassland and marshy ground with a rich variety of plants and birds. Originally, the area was planted with lodgepole pine to help stabilise the steep sides of this old spoil heap. More recently, these trees have been replaced with native species including oak and ash.

In the past we have felled lodgepole pine, upgraded the footpath and cleared invading broom from areas of heather. This time we will be working with SWT to continue to fell lodgepole pine trees in order to provide more room and light for native species.

October 11

Easter Craiglockhart Hill: meadow raking

Easter Craiglockhart Hill is situated 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 footpath, cleared Japanese knotweed and built a nesting platform

for mute swans. On this visit we will be raking up strimmed grass to continue the development of a wildflower meadow.

October 18

**Wester Craiglockhart Hill:
gorse and false oat grass removal**

Wester Craiglockhart Hill lies about 5km south-west of Edinburgh's city centre, and, because of its geological interest, was first designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in April 1957. In 1986 it was notified due to its biological importance. This is a small, steep sided hill, 175m at its peak, which provides one of the largest areas of unimproved grassland in Edinburgh. Due to the diversity of grassland types, Wester Craiglockhart Hill contains an unusually high number of plant species, including many examples of locally uncommon flowers—for example, purple milk vetch and shining cranesbill, and one nationally rare species—maiden pink. On this, our second visit to the site, we will be removing false oat grass and gorse, both of which are encroaching onto the grassland.

October 24 SATURDAY

**Roslin Glen:
step and pathwork**

Roslin Glen is a 19 hectare 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, ramsons, 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.

October 25

**Roslin Glen:
step and pathwork**

This will be a continuation of the work begun on October 24.

October 30 – November 1

**Carrifran Halloween Residential:
tree planting**

The Carrifran valley is a magnificent ice-carved valley in the Moffat Hills in the Southern Uplands, deforested by human activity. The 660 hectare site was

bought by the Borders Forest Trust on 1st January 2000. Since then, they have been trying to re-create an extensive tract of wild and largely wooded land, evoking the countryside of six thousand years ago. The Carrifran Wildwood project has established the valley as a large reserve. The ecological restoration of the site is now proceeding; some areas will be left to regenerate on their own and others are being planted with trees grown from tree seed native to the area. The Borders Forest Trust have planted half a million trees to date. LCV has worked at Carrifran for the past few years and are returning to continue the tree planting effort. Bear in mind that this is a strenuous task in an upland environment in autumn—please bring sturdy footwear and warm clothing.

Accommodation will be in the Moffat Water Hall—a heated camping barn with toilets and a shower, as well as cooking facilities. For more information look on-line at www.moffatwaterhall.org. You will need to bring your own sleeping bag and mat. Halloween outfit optional. To book on this residential please contact Debbie our transport secretary before 28 October.

November 8

North Edinburgh Cycle Path: coppicing/scrub clearance

This cycle/walkway follows the old inner city railway network, and runs from Roseburn to Leith with branches off to other areas. The management of the verges of these routes is organised by a committee, which includes the Scottish Wildlife Trust. The aim is to enhance the wildlife value of the network by maintaining a variety of habitats—scrub, wildflower meadows, marsh and narrow areas of woodland. On this visit we will be clearing scrub and coppicing to help maintain the pathway. This will also promote biodiversity and create new habitats for wildlife.

November 15



Traprain Law: gorse removal

At 221m Traprain Law is a distinctive, dome shaped hill, which overlooks the East Lothian town of Haddington. First occupied about 3500 years ago it has a long history of human activity—there is evidence that the site was used for burial as well as for manufacturing bronze tools. In the early twentieth century archaeologists working on the site uncovered a cache of Roman silverware. It is believed that the mythical King Loth of the Goddodin, from whom the Lothians take their name, ruled from the hill in the first half of the fourth century.

Over recent years gorse has been encroaching on the predominantly unimproved and grazed grassland which covers most of the Law. There are several uncommon plant species present such as prickly sedge, bloody cranesbill and

meadow saxifrage. The flora also include some interesting lichens which will benefit from a reduction of gorse cover. Noteworthy fauna on Traprain Law include peregrine falcons, ravens, fulmars and badgers. On this task we will be working with the East Lothian Ranger Service to help cut back some of the gorse so benefiting many of the species present.

November 22

Beecraigs Country Park: pathwork

Beecraigs Country Park, near Linlithgow, is owned and managed by West Lothian Council. It spans 370 hectares over the Bathgate Hills and comprises a commercially active conifer plantation, a deer attraction, a loch, a caravan and camping site and a large play area. Beecraigs is navigable by several way marked trails and offers both the shelter of deep woodland and access to fantastic views over the Forth Valley. LCV has done a variety of tasks here, including tree planting and coppicing, drystone dyking, footpath work, boardwalk construction, bridge building and step building. On this visit we will be working on paths within the site.

November 29

Leadburn Community Woodland: tree 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, and planting at the site has recently begun. On this visit we will be planting trees. The area is boggy in places, so wellington boots are recommended if you have them.

December 6

Beecraigs Country Park: pathwork

This will be a continuation of the work begun on November 22.

December 13

Addiewell Bing: tree felling



See October 4 for a description of this site and task.

December 20

Addiewell Bing: Christmas-tree felling

This will be a continuation of the work begun on October 4. We will continue to thin areas of lodgepole pine so that the area can be underplanted with native

broadleaved trees at a later date. Volunteers on this task may select the tops off the best thinnings to take home for Christmas trees. If you bribe the driver, you may also have it delivered to your door!

December 27



**Addiewell Bing:
tree felling**

See October 4 for a description of this site and task.

January 2 SATURDAY

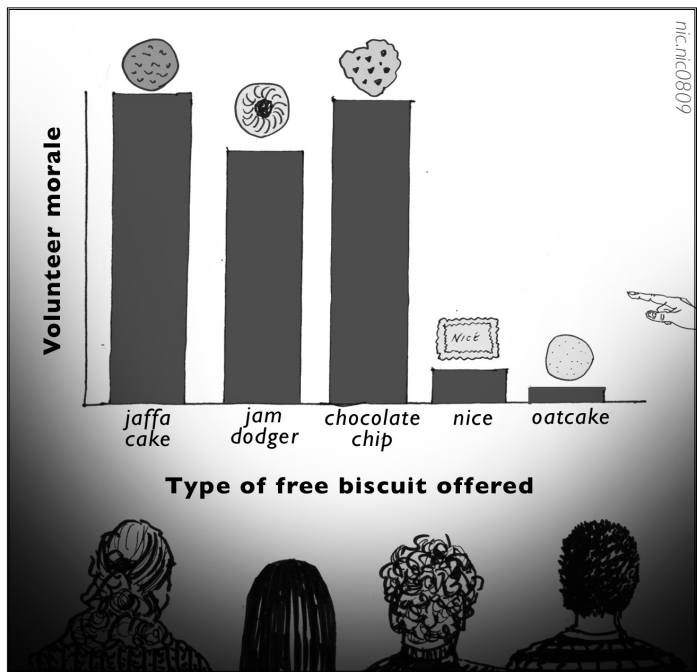
**Addiewell Bing:
tree felling**

See October 4 for a description of this site and task.

January 3

**Addiewell Bing:
tree felling**

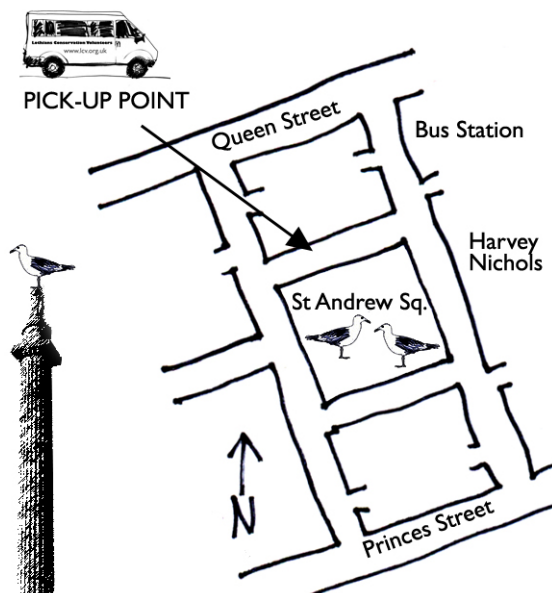
See October 4 for a description of this site and task.



The LCV training day covered all key elements of leadership.

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 warm clothes, a hat, 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.

Before you come on any task with us, please make sure that your tetanus vaccination is up to date. We don't cancel the task if it's raining.

Residential Tasks

Residentials are great fun—see the review in the *Views* section—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 afterwards.



News

Volunteer Fair on 1 October

Edinburgh's annual volunteer recruitment fair takes place at the Assembly Rooms, George Street on Thursday 1 October. We will have a stall to publicise LCV activities and recruit new volunteers. Martin Brownjohn our publicity officer may need some help from existing volunteers to talk to the public about the kind of work we do. If you can help please contact him before 26 October. Contact details on contact page of website.

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 get in touch with Simon Bonsall, details on contact page of website

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 Mark Herron—details on contact page of website—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 Mark Herron—details on contact page of website—and let him 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 David Monaghan—details on the contact page of the LCV website.

Social Events

For all events it is better to book beforehand by emailing either Alexandra or Emma, social convenors—details on the contact page of the LCV website—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 above for details.

Tues 15 September

Pub Quiz at Greyfriars Bobby

Join LCV in Greyfriars Bobby bar at 8 p. m.—quiz starts at 9 p. m. Greyfriars Bobby pub is at 30 – 34 Candlemaker Row. 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 eight.

Sat 31 October

Halloween Party

Meet at 7.30 p. m. at Ken and Sarah's house. Please let us know in advance that you are coming by emailing the social conveners. Please wear fancy dress—there is a prize for the best costume—bring your own drinks and some nibbles.

Sat 14 November**LCV Fundraising Ceilidh**

An opportunity to reel and jig as the nights draw in. There will be live music from Crowdie House—a popular fiddle fuelled ceilidh outfit—and a bar. Come to Southside Community Centre on Nicolson Street from 8 p. m. for a great night out and some aerobic exercise—the dances are very easy to pick up even if you are completely new to them. The Ceilidh is also valuable annual fundraising event for us so bring along your friends to support LCV.

Mon 23 November**Cinema Night**

Meet Emma and Alexandra at the Filmhouse on Lothian Road at 7 p. m. for a drink in the bar and we'll decide what film we will go and see and where—with plenty to choose from between the programmes of the Filmhouse and nearby Cameo or Odeon cinemas.

Thurs 17 December**German Market and the Big Wheel**

Join LCV to visit the German Market on Princes Street for some *gluhwein*, some ice skating and if you are feeling brave, a ride on the Big Wheel. Meet at 7 p. m. by the Scott Monument.

**Sun 20 December****Mulled Wine and Mince Pies**

From 8 p. m. meet in Sarah McConachie's flat for mulled wine and mince pies. Please bring along a festive contribution and let Sarah know if you are coming by sending an email to the social conveners.

Date TBC January**Pantomime – *Peter Pan* at the Lyceum**

Join LCV for panto fun to see *Peter Pan* at the Lyceum. If you would like to come along please contact Alexandra by Friday 18 December. Money for the ticket should be paid by 18 December to Alexandra, either by mailing a her cheque or paying her in person at the German Market event on 17 December. Ticket price will be confirmed nearer the time.

Views

Summer on the Isle of Lewis Residential: Jul 3 - 11

An early start from St Andrew's Square saw us zipping on to the Forth Road Bridge before anyone else was up, zooming past Perth while most people were still thinking about breakfast and chugging into Ullapool with more than enough time for lunch, shopping, sitting in the sunshine and examining the horizon for any sign of the ferry which eventually departed—an hour late—with the LCV van and full complement of volunteers on board bound for the Isle of Lewis.

A flat calm crossing gave us plenty of opportunities to check out the puffins and gannets even if there was a definite absence of exciting sea mammals. We were soon pulling into Stornoway Harbour to a general chorus of, 'Gosh, it's bigger than I thought'. A scenic drive down the coast then took us to our accommodation on Loch Erisort in the comfortable and well equipped youth hostel at Kershader.

Saturday dawned warm and sunny and we headed off for the site at Aline Community Woodland, a large ex-Forestry Commission plantation that is now being replanted with native species and developed for the public with improved access and facilities.



Ooops...

Work got off to a bad start when the digger we'd been lent was eaten by the bog. Just kidding, but we did all make a trip to look at the wreckage of a sunken

digger partly submerged in the bog a short distance from our work site. The site's history as a known eater of diggers seemed quite understandable when, three days later, we watched Keith and Willie sink eight foot stobs into the boggy ground at our worksite by the simple, and minimally energetic, method of hanging on the post driver.

Aline is a large site and there were several tasks we could have picked but we decided to go for a combination of log clearance and boardwalk construction while Tony set off to form a one man tree planting party. We spent most of the week building a picnic area on a small hill with a view towards Harris and a section of boardwalk to connect the new picnic area to the existing boardwalk.

This was hardly boardwalk for beginners! Not only was it not straight but two of the three corners changed level as well as direction and even the picnic area was on challenging terrain. Much poking around under the existing boardwalk ensued as we endeavoured to produce something suitably robust. In the end, despite an epic last day which saw five of us still hammering furiously at seven in the evening, we did manage to come up with something which could hold its own alongside the existing structure. A local couple passing with their dog were certainly most appreciative. They'd been checking on our progress every evening after we'd gone and were pleased with the result, as well as surprised to meet us working hard on our final late shift.



Boardwalk under construction

It wasn't all work and no play however, as we had two days off to explore the island. The first took us to the standing stones at Calanais, where the fine surrounding meadow generated rather more interest than the stones themselves, then on to the broch at Dun Carloway, where Tony and Willie were delighted to find that they could squeeze through the narrow passages between the double walls of the iron age dwelling, and finally to the beach at Uig where the water was, in defiance of all expectation, warm, due to a combination of sun-baked sand and a rising tide. Uig bay also featured more helicopters than any of us had ever seen flying at once—we counted at least six. According to Keith and Christine one of the local residents trains helicopter pilots so we suspected that they were buzzing along on a class outing. Our second day off took us down

into Harris for lunch followed by a climb up Chaipaval where we were rewarded with a grand view of half of the Hebrides and St Kilda for good measure.



Harris beaches viewed from the lower slopes of Chaipaval

A late ferry on our last day on the island meant that we had time for a wander round Stornoway before embarking on our return journey. Once safely across the Minch we were glad to enjoy quiet roads back to Edinburgh as it was still pretty late by the time we had dropped everyone back home.

All in all, a grand week on Lewis at a super site, with great accommodation and good weather thrown in. Definitely a place to go back to. Thanks to everyone for their hard work, with a special mention for drivers Willie, Keith and Christine and an extra helping of thanks to Christine who also managed the catering.

Louisa Martin

Thanks too to Louisa for leading this residential and documenting the experience, and Keith Knight for sharing his photos—Ed.

Further information:

More details of Kershader Youth Hostel are available online at:
<http://www.syha.org.uk/hostels/islands/kershader.aspx>

Bawsinch After Dark

I didn't really plan to end up crouched beside a bedsheet laid out in the woods on the far side of Duddingston Loch at midnight, but then this had been no ordinary Saturday night—this was BioBlitz 2009.

BioBlitz was organised by BTCV Scotland and Historic Scotland. A twenty-four hour survey of the biological diversity in Holyrood Park, it began at 1500hrs on August 15. Expert naturalists were accompanied by volunteers as they precisely located and identified as many different species as they could of the flora and fauna within the park boundary. An ambitious biological field study, BioBlitz aimed to underline the value and importance of biodiversity conservation work. I heard about it on the LCV newsgroup and volunteered to help on the Saturday until 2200hrs. Yes sir.

At 0800hrs on BioBlitz Saturday I woke up to rain. I had been told to register at the Holyrood Park Education Centre (HPEC) at noon. By 1100hrs the rain was at persistent car-wash strength. The prospect of several hours spent in full waterproof battle gear poking around the slopes of an allegedly extinct volcano in a sprawling urban park with a group of strange bio boffins now seemed positively foolhardy, but it was too late to bail out. The assault loomed.

After introductions, a group huddle round a 3-D Tracey Island style model of Holyrood Park to discuss manoeuvres, a photo-call, tea and biscuits and—at last—an improvement in the weather; my mood lifted. This might even be fun. I elected to join the Lepidoptera group and we formed two parties. I accompanied Nick and Rose, a crack husband and wife team from Aberdeen. They provided the expertise and, after a quick introductory lesson, I operated their GPS, reading out co-ordinates when required. I also took photographs and occasionally asked helpful questions such as: 'Is that a butterfly?'



a cinnabar moth caterpillar

We began with a gentle march up to Hunter's Bog, Nick carefully beating grasses and shrubs to encourage any day moths or butterflies to show face. Sadly the wind remained strong and blustery—not ideal for viewing delicate winged insects. Despite this we began to record species. Following Rose's example I examined some clumps of ragwort growing alongside the path and was rewarded with the sight of a black and yellow striped cinnabar moth caterpillar—the first of many. The day followed this pattern of seeking and recording until we had covered a large area of the park and returned to HPEC for dinner at 1900hrs.

Bolstered by the hearty fare on offer we were soon ready for a selection of evening activities such as setting humane traps for small mammals and seeking bats using a detector that picked up their echolocation ultrasounds—but having heard Rose’s description of moth trapping I intended to stick with the Lepidoptera squad. Any notion of my getting home by ten o’clock had long since been forgotten.

We set off in convoy for the Bawsinch reserve then picked our way through the night to a location that Nick felt would maximise our mothspotting opportunities. Various other parties peeled off en route to seek out their particular quarry for the BioBlitz-o-meter. Once at our spot Nick began to create an unlikely assemblage of electronic wiring and bed linen.

As Nick unravelled various wires and pinned a pristine white sheet to the forest floor I felt we might have reached our peak ‘mad scientist’ BioBlitz moment. There was, however, determined method in Nick’s madness. After a false start and a quick running repair on a loose connection in the wiring, a generator powered up a small mercury vapour lamp suspended from a tripod above the sheet. The lamp began to glow, illuminating the rectangular white expanse of cotton below. Then the magic began. All manner of insects were drawn into the light. Rose explained that there are various theories to elucidate why insects are drawn to bright light in this way but that there is no definitive answer to date. Whatever the mechanics, this was a visual treat.

The sheet was covered with glinting, crawling, fluttering life. It looked as if someone had scattered torn fragments of a bejewelled and richly textured tapestry at our feet. Some moths flickered like animated gold leaf in the light while others resembled tiny divas in lavish fluffy outfits. Nick and Rose seemed a little disappointed with the range of species that showed up but to a mothspotting novice the sight was unforgettable.

I was in awe at Nick and Rose’s ability to identify these mere flickers of light with such seeming ease and speed. Nick prowled the perimeter of the sheet with resolute focus reciting Latin names as he dashed here and there to catch the more jittery species in sample jars for identification before they were released back into the night. Resting on her elbow Rose reclined serenely at the edge of the white cotton arena, appearing as at home resting on the forest floor as she might on a sofa. Nick’s observations were complemented by Rose’s well honed sense of ‘incoming’ species. It was like being a guest at a miniature airfield, with moths flapping in circuits like toy helicopters before they settled on the floodlit ground in a dance of intricate air traffic. Rose continued to add details of any newly arrived species to the BioBlitz list as we approached midnight.

Clearly a seasoned veteran of these night-time forays, Rose joked ruefully at the prospect of a six o'clock start to Sunday morning with the assessment of a second moth trap that Nick had set to be left undisturbed overnight in the reserve. By 0100hrs the experts called it a night. I didn't volunteer to accompany them at 0600hrs on Sunday as I had a prior engagement but if I ever have the chance to 'BioBlitz' again I will not hesitate. No sir.



a mother of pearl moth drawn to the light

Further information:

At the last count a total of 826 species of flora and fauna were identified during the Holyrood Park BioBlitz 2009 event and it is hoped that a website will be developed in due course where full details will be made available.

Nicola Murray

Resi Recipe

Sharon and Martin's Provençal Vegetable Pie—Serves eight to twelve.

Remember that when cooking on a residential there are plenty of people who are willing to help. This is a dish of three parts comprising a vegetable filling in a tomato sauce covered with a french bread topping. If there isn't an oven at your accommodation you could probably still make this using a hob and grill—Ed.



Notes:

Despite the many ingredients and much prepping, this recipe is really hearty and tasty.

Rich tomato sauce

Ingredients:

100g butter
2 onions peeled and chopped
4 garlic cloves chopped
4 x 400g cans plum tomatoes
3 tbsp tomato puree
generous pinch of dried oregano

Method:

1 Melt the butter in a saucepan, add the onions and garlic and cook gently for about 10 minutes until softened.
2 Add the tomatoes with the tomato puree and oregano. Cook, uncovered, over a low heat for 25 – 30 minutes, stirring occasionally until the sauce is thick and pulpy and season with salt and pepper.

Filling

Ingredients:

4 tbsp olive oil
2 red onions peeled and sliced
2 small fennel bulbs diced
4 courgettes diced
2 x 400g cans flageolet beans
250g pitted black olives chopped
2 tbsp capers

Method:

- 1 Preheat oven to 200°C /Gas Mark 6
- 2 Heat the olive oil in a frying pan, add the onion and fennel and fry gently for 10 minutes or until softened. Add the courgette and fry for a further 5 mins. Stir into the hot tomato sauce, together with the flageolet beans and their liquid, the olives, capers and seasoning to taste.
- 3 Transfer to a lightly oiled baking dish (or 2) and cover with foil. Bake for 30 minutes

Topping

Ingredients:

2 sticks french bread
180ml—12 tbsp—extra virgin olive oil
basil—fresh or dried
parsley—fresh or dried
2 garlic cloves chopped
50g grated cheddar or parmesan

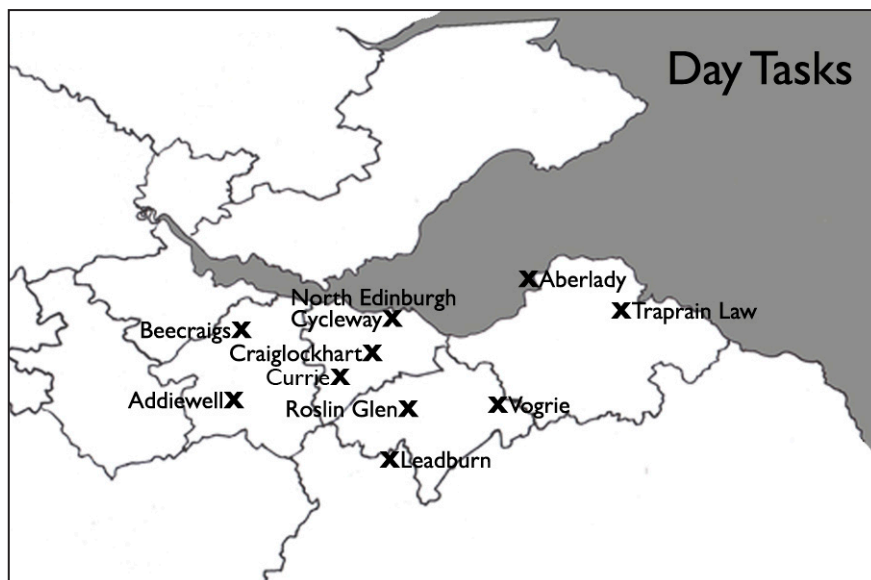


Method:

- 1 Slice the bread so that it will cover the vegetables in the baking dish(es).
- 2 Mix extra virgin olive oil, herbs and garlic in a bowl, remove stew from the oven, dip the bread slices into the mixture and arrange overlapping slices on top the vegetables to form a crust.
- 3 Scatter the cheese over the bread crust and bake for a further 15 minutes.

Thanks to Sharon for this recipe. If you are willing to share your vegetarian culinary secrets send a recipe—for ten—to the Mucker editor (details on contact page of the website) and we'll pull one out of the pot for the next Mucker—Ed.

Task locations



LCV People

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

Louisa Martin

Co-ordinator

David Monaghan

Treasurer

Matt McCabe

Task Organiser

Debbie Tribak

Transport Secretary

Mark Herron

Membership Secretary

Simon Bonsall

Leader/Driver Organiser

Martin Brownjohn

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

September	Sun 13	Currie High School	Burn clearance
	Sun 20	Bawsinch	Path maintenance/weeding
	Sun 27	Aberlady Bay	Sea buckthorn clearance
October	SAT 3	Vogrie	Pond clearance/weeding
	Sun 4	Addiewell Bing	Tree felling
	Sun 11	Easter Craiglockhart	Meadow raking
	Sun 18	Wester Craiglockhart	Gorse and false oat grass removal
	SAT 24	Roslin Glen	Step and pathwork
	Sun 25	Roslin Glen	Step and pathwork
	30 – 1	Carrifran residential	Tree planting
November	Sun 8	North Edinburgh Cycleway	Coppicing/scrub clearance
	Sun 15	Traprain Law	Gorse removal
	Sun 22	Beecraigs Country Park	Pathwork
	Sun 29	Leadburn Community Woodlnd.	Tree planting
December	Sun 6	Beecraigs Country Park	Pathwork
	Sun 13	Addiewell Bing	Tree felling
	Sun 20	Addiewell Bing	Christmas Tree felling
	Sun 27	Addiewell Bing	Tree felling
January	SAT 2	Addiewell Bing	Tree felling
	Sun 3	Addiewell Bing	Tree felling



Other Events

September	Tues 8	7.30 p. m.	Monthly Meeting
	Tues 15	8.00 p. m.	Greyfriars Bobby Pub quiz
October	Tues 13	7.30 p. m.	Monthly Meeting
	Sat 31	7.30 p. m.	Halloween Party
November	Tues 10	7.30 p. m.	Monthly Meeting
	Sat 14	8.00 p. m.	LCV Fundraising Ceilidh
	Mon 23	7.00 p. m.	Cinema Night
December	Tues 8	7.30 p. m.	Monthly Meeting
	Thurs 17	7.00 p.m.	German Market
	Sun 20	8.00 p. m.	Mulled wine and mince pies
January	TBC	TBC	Pantomime - <i>Peter Pan</i>