

NSA VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2012

FLEET VALLEY NSA

Wednesday 3rd October - Evening Talk about Discovery Day in Gatehouse
7.30pm at Community Centre, Gatehouse

The results of the geophysical survey undertaken earlier in the day to discover more about a number of barrows spotted from the air will be presented.

Thursday 4th October – Garries Wood

Meet **10 am** at the town car park

Clear and thin at the bottom of the well path – habitat piles with wood and treat stumps

Supervised by Council Ranger, Ross Gemmell. Please advise Ross if you intend to come on 07834 567893 so that he can bring tools and equipment.

Wednesday 10th October – to be advised

Wednesday 17th October

Work on the River Fleet

Supervised by Galloway Fisheries Trust

Please contact Ron Forster for confirmation (tel 07711 362645) of time and location

Wednesday 24th October - Cally Woods

Meet at **10am** Murray Centre

Supervised by Forestry Commission Scotland

Thursday 1 November – Garries Wood

Meet **10 am** at the town car park

Clear footpaths of leaf litter and re-define edges in Garries Wood

Supervised by Council Ranger, Ross Gemmell.

Ron Forster (tel 07711 362645) will advise of any other tasks arranged during October.

EAST STEWARTRY COAST AND NITH ESTUARY NSAS

Every Tuesday– Mersehead Reserve

Meet **10am** at the Wildlife Garden, Sulwath Centre.

Supervised by RSPB

Thursday 18th October - Gutcher's Isle

10 am start. Gorse pruning and repair to steps

Supervised by Council Ranger, Ross Gemmell. Please contact Ross if you intend to come on 07834 567893 so that he can confirm meeting point and can bring tools and equipment.

COME AND JOIN US!

Clearing the River Fleet



Removing branches from the river

The Volunteers spent two busy days by the River Fleet helping Neil of the Galloway Fisheries Board clear a fallen tree from the pool above Rusco Bridge. On both occasions a small boat was launched into the Fleet and manhandled under the bridge to help reach the partly submerged tree. On the first day the combined efforts of Neil in a dry suit, 2 volunteers in the boat and others on the bank managed to cut off and remove from the river most of the branches from the tree but the trunk and one large branch defied all efforts. However, returning the next week armed with a chain saw, most of the rest of the tree was removed successfully.



Moving boat upriver under Rusco Bridge



Cutting branches

Another task which occupied the Fleet Valley Volunteers was continuing the removal of Himalayan balsam from the roadside. Plants which had grown up alongside the Laurieston Road, following the previous clearing, were removed before they could spread their seed. Unfortunately the Himalayan balsam growing opposite the Barlay Mill had already set seed and the pods were exploding at the least touch making it pointless to remove them.



We will need to carry out this removal earlier next year. However it did allow me to taste some pods (see last issue). As described in "Flora Britannica" they tasted nutty but the strangest thing was the feeling as they exploded in my mouth.

Himalayan Balsam opposite Barlay Mill

[Text and photos Jim Logan]

The Mighty Mushroom Hunt

A week-long series of fungi-themed events are being held in Dumfries and Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere between 29th September and 7th October.

Events include Ross Gemmell leading a trip round Kirkconnell Flow National Nature Reserve to identifying fungi (3 October), and 'Food for Thought' at Cream o'Galloway with Peter Norman which involves coffee and lunch as well as a search for wild mushrooms (4 October £12.50).



A visit to Kirkcudbright Town Hall for Fungus Friday (11am-5pm, 5th October) is recommended to see the exhibition of fungi and find out more about the subject, including short fungus walks in the surrounding countryside. Hotels/restaurants in Kirkcudbright will also be offering special fungi-flavoured dishes on their menus during Friday evening.

The Great Survivor

Question:

What is 8cm long, older than the dinosaurs, hides in the mud and can be seen at Caerlaverock and almost nowhere else in the UK?



Answer:

Triops cancriformis, the tadpole shrimp

The tadpole shrimp was on the earth before the dinosaurs and has survived without perceptible change through continental drift, cataclysmic earthquakes, upheavals which threw up mountain ranges or formed deep ocean trenches, ice ages and severe climatic changes for over 270 million years.

However, no triops had been seen in Scotland for over 50 years until one day in 2010 it was spotted in the puddle on the Caerlaverock saltmarsh. Little is known about this ancient creature which lays its tiny, 0.5mm-long eggs in mud where they can lie dormant for years only hatching in when water and temperature conditions are right. No-one knows the longevity of the eggs but they are dispersed rather like seeds e.g. on cattle hooves, birds' feet or tractor tyres and carried from field to field.

Other species of triops have been introduced into the UK but the cancriformis can be distinguished by their swallow tail and horseshoe shape. If more of them can be discovered it will not only to take the pressure off the two sites already known at Caerlaverock but increase the chances of helping them to secure their former distribution. The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) is midway through a major study of the creature and you can see the adult triops for yourself in a special tank at the Caerlaverock Visitor Centre.

Dr Larry Griffin would be delighted to hear from anyone who thinks they might have found *Triops cancriformis*. Please contact him via the WWT Caerlaverock, Eastpark Farm Dumfries DG1 4RS 01387 770200

[Information and photos Larry Griffin]

News from the East Stewartry, Mersehead 18.09.2012

No, winter hasn't come early to RSPB Mersehead! This is us laying a white geotextile liner in readiness for a gravel overlay. This particular garden area, just outside the Sulwath Centre, was formerly covered in bark chippings, which as we all know, eventually break down into a very weed-friendly medium. After many months of fairly constant weeding, it was agreed that the area would be made less maintenance heavy, and a liner and a good layer of gravel added to replace the bark.



Getting started



First tonne of gravel

So the usual Tuesday Crew, plus new RSPB officer Rowena and Residential Volunteer Nicky, set about the transformation, with the invaluable help of Eric on the tractor – we wouldn't have enjoyed shifting 5 tonnes of gravel by barrow! The final task was to artistically replace the various pieces of log/driftwood in the area, and erect some new birdfeeder posts. Job done!



Halfway there



Finished!

Criffel 20.09.2012

Unfortunately we weren't as lucky with the weather for our second foray up the new Criffel path, so photo opportunities were a bit thin on the ground. However, the rainfall managed to avoid the 50mm forecast, so we completed the last section of gully clearing without being totally saturated! We also fitted in the re-siting of a way marker, as well as adding a strong spring closer to the gate at the top of the final section of metalled path. Shame it then deteriorates into a peat bog!



Getting ready for the challenge



Well-earned rest!

[Text and photos Doug Walker]

Turning the Tide on Marine Litter

Volunteers turned out on a September weekend to help keep Carrick and Rockcliffe shore clean as part of a global movement turning the tide on marine litter. The task was undertaken as part of the Marine Conservation Society's (MCS) Beachwatch Weekend, the beach clean and litter survey which aims to highlight the issues of beach litter around the UK's coastline.

These locations have been surveyed for a number of years and surprisingly both beaches had much less litter collected in 2012 than in previous beach cleans. There may be a number of reasons for the reduction of litter found on the beach ranging from there being less marine litter being produced to there being more activity by people removing litter.



Carrick

The information collected for the survey will be used by MCS to identify UK wide trends and help target action towards the sources of marine litter as well as providing data to assess local issues.



Rockcliffe

The Making the Most of the Coast project will be looking for volunteers over the next two years to ensure local beaches remain clean and safe for all.

Thank you to all the volunteers who took part.

[Text Nic Coombey]

New SNH Reserve Manager for Southern Scotland



Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has recently appointed a new National Nature Reserve manager for Southern Scotland. Based in SNH's Dumfries office, Ed Glenwright will manage some of the region's best wildlife sites and help to keep them in good health for everyone to enjoy.

As most national nature reserves (NNRs) have habitats and species that are internationally important, one focus of Ed's work will be the protection and careful management of wildlife. But he will be also be aiming to deliver an improved

visitor experience, encouraging more people to appreciate these special places for nature and increasing the number of volunteers.

Ed said: "I feel immensely privileged to be working at some of the best places for wildlife that Scotland has to offer. I'm looking forward to getting out and about, meeting local people, and building on the good work already done on these reserves by previous reserve managers. I am aware that the NSA Volunteers have worked at Caerlaverock, Kirkconnell Flow and Cairnsmore of Fleet in the past and I am looking forward to working with you in the near future.'

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels (SSRS)



In addition to Garden Squirrel Watch Week on 1st – 7th October there is a talk at the Kirroughtree Visitor Centre.

Date and time: Wednesday 10th October 2012. 10:30 -12:00

Location: Kirroughtree Visitor Centre, Kirroughtree Forest, Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire DG8 7BE. Tel 01671 402165 Grid reference: NX452646

Talk: about the red squirrel conservation project, what challenges are facing the red squirrel (including the encroaching grey squirrel and the Squirrelpox virus) and how you can get involved in the work of SSRS. The talk is free.

If you would like more information about SSRS please contact

Heinz Traut, Project Officer (South-West)

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels (*now incorporating Red Squirrels in South Scotland*)

Studio 1, Hill Head Mill, Kirkgunzeon, Dumfries, DG2 8LA

www.red-squirrels.org.uk

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If you have volunteering news or photos please contact Alison Steel,
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If you would like more information about anything in this newsletter contact Anna Johnson, NSA Officer, Anna.Johnson@dumgal.gov.uk 01387 260242