

BIODIVERSITY ACTION



Inverclyde
Renfrewshire
East Renfrewshire
LBAP

INVERCLYDE, EAST RENFREWSHIRE & RENFREWSHIRE

Issue No. 1

SUMMER 2008

NEW RESIDENCE FOR BLACK GUILLEMOTS



Black Guillemots are normally associated with remote rocky coasts but have been breeding well on industrial buildings along the Firth of Clyde

Black Guillemots or Tysties, *Cephus grylle*, are endearing, medium-sized seabirds, about 32-38 cm in length. Adult birds have black bodies with a white wing patch, a thin dark bill and red legs and feet.

Unlike other Auks, which nest in huge colonies, they tend to be found in ones and twos. Their usual

breeding habitat in the UK is rocky shores, cliffs and islands in western and northern Scotland and Northern Ireland. They dive for food from the surface, swimming underwater. They eat mainly fish and crustaceans, also some molluscs, insects and plant material.

In Inverclyde the birds had been nesting in the eaves of a waterfront building in Kingston Shipyard since 1979. This had been the first case of Black Guillemots breeding in such an industrial site. Unfortunately, the extensive regeneration of the derelict waterfront and the re-routing of the A8 meant that the building was demolished and the

birds lost their nesting place.

Compensation efforts are underway, however, because a team from Clydeport has installed 12 nest boxes within Greenock's James Watt Dock. The boxes were funded by Lower Clyde Greenspace but Clydeport's experts installed the boxes because of the potentially hazardous locations - close to water level and ideally hanging over the water, so that they are out of potential predators' reach.

All that remains to be seen is if the boxes live up to Black Guillemots' exacting standards in future breeding seasons!

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan is being updated. A new batch of Action Plans are being developed by Steering Group members:

- WATER VOLE
- MOUNTAIN HARE
- SCRUB HABITAT
- HOUSE SPARROW
- FARMLAND PASSERINE BIRDS
- GREEN HAIRSTREAK
- ASPEN
- BLACK-HEADED GULL

New Image Sought for "Scruffy" Scrub

Scrub seems to be one of those transitory habitats: here today; gone tomorrow. Then it springs up somewhere else. Increasingly, however, scrubby sites seem to be disappearing forever. A few may have matured into fully grown woodlands but most have been

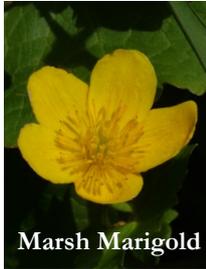
cleared for development or for more intensive farming. When this happens we lose declining birds like Bullfinches and Song Thrushes, wild flowers and the inherently beautiful blossom of our local shrub species, like Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Gorse, Broom, Dog Rose,

Elder and even the Bramble. A new Scrub Action Plan seeks to reverse these declines by plotting existing valuable sites, negotiating with owners and public authorities, practical site management and telling people just how wonderful scrub is for biodiversity.

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LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION NEWS



Marsh Marigold

A popular local park for the residents of Foxbar in Paisley, Durrockstock Park also contains valuable habitats.

Durrockstock Declared as Local Nature Reserve

In January Renfrewshire Council formally declared its third statutory Local Nature Reserve at Durrockstock Park at in Paisley.

On 27th April the Local Nature Reserve was officially launched when Councillor Lorraine Cameron welcomed the many visitors who had turned out on a sunny Sunday for a fun afternoon of environmental puppet shows, nest box building organised by the Friends of Foxbar and the Renfrewshire Green

Gym, exhibition stands mounted by various local conservation groups and woodland tree challenges posed by the Countryside Ranger Service.

Recently Carts Greenspace has completed a path building project to improve access between play areas whilst protecting some interesting fragments of semi-natural woodland from too much trampling pressure.

Whilst Durrockstock is a popular park, closer inspec-

tion of its quieter corners reveals plenty of wildlife, including 118 plant species (listed so far), at least 34 types of bird and the pond teeming with aquatic life.

On 4th June 18 members of the Eco Committee from Heriot Primary School helped Carts Greenspace and the Renfrewshire Green Gym to plant 300 wildflower plugs to create a new wildflower meadow at the edge of the Local Nature Reserve.

WARNING SIGN?

2006 & 2007

SURVEY RESULTS

FIND ONLY TWO

MALE BLACK

GROUSE AT

KNOWN LEK

SITES WITHIN

CLYDE

MUIRSHIEL

REGIONAL PARK

Sand Martins check in at Inchinnan

The Biodiversity Partnership's first purpose built artificial Sand Martin nesting wall was constructed in 2006, thanks to funding from the Community Environmental Renewal Scheme (Scottish Executive & Forward Scotland), Scottish Natural Heritage, Professor Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest Fund, Paisley Natural History Society and Ren-

frewshire Council.

Sand Martins are a UK species of conservation concern. They spend winter in Africa but migrate in the spring to breed in Europe, making a round trip of at least 5000 miles. For the first two years, however, no Sand Martins used the wall but finally this spring around six pairs have decided to take up residence.

The wall is installed near Inchinnan, close to Newshot Island proposed Local Nature Reserve. It is hoped that the offspring raised at the wall this year will return when it's their turn to breed, so that more birds arrive each spring in future years.



©Norman Tait

Loch Libo Nature Reserve: a secret sanctuary



Close up of Tussock Sedges thriving in the marginal swamp at SWT's Loch Libo Nature Reserve

Loch Libo is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Scottish Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve, which can be difficult to find. Located just north of the village of Uplawmoor in the Lugton Water valley it is accessed from a lay-by on the A736. From here, walk north on the road verge for approxi-

mately 100m to the rail crossing. Cross the railway through the gates to enter the secluded world of Loch Libo.

The loch is long and shallow, nestling between the railway and a steep wooded slope to the south. Wet willow and aspen copses give way to extensive swamps near the loch's edges. which are dotted with incredible

clumps of Tussock Sedge.

Volunteers are needed to study the wildlife here. Impressive species lists already exist but new additions have been made in 2008, for example, Jack Snipe roosting with Common Snipe in the swamps, and some of the uncommon plants like Cowbane have been found to be thriving.

Email: gsmart@swt.org.uk

Issue No. 1

Paisley Museum welcomes new Curator of Natural History

After a long wait of seven years, Paisley Museum has a new Curator of Natural History.

Paisley Free Public Library and Museum was established in 1871 to house a number of collections donated by organisations such as the Paisley Philosophical Society. Natural history formed a significant collection and over the years this has grown to include a diverse range of material from minerals and rocks to fossils, invertebrates,

mammals, birds, fish and plants.

Natural history collections play a key role in the education, interpretation, scientific research and historical studies of the world around us. In the past, specimens both local and worldwide were collected, but the collection of biological information is now also recognised as vital in the interpretation of the natural world. In response to this need the new curator has the responsibility of re-establishing the Biological

Records Office at the museum. For further information on biological recording in Scotland visit the website at www.brisc.org.uk and for more information on the natural history collections, please contact the curator at the address below.

Nicola Macintyre, Assistant Curator of Natural History, Paisley Museum, High Street, Paisley PA1 2BA
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Female Hen Harrier flying low over moorland at Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

Hen Harriers again stars of CCTV at Clyde Muirshiel

2008 has proved to be another successful year for Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park's "birds on the box" partnership projects.

Nesting Swallows could be seen on TV at Cornalees Visitor Centre, near Greenock, and Hen Harriers on TV at Muirshiel Visitor Centre, Lochwinnoch.

The Hen Harrier project

gave visitors a unique opportunity to experience the day-to-day lives of one of our rarest raptors through breathtakingly close CCTV footage live from Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. By mid June the Hen Harrier family comprised two eggs and one chick. Staff and visitors alike were glued to the screens, watching to see how things developed.

The Hen Harrier remains one of our most threatened birds, although changing attitudes and wildlife viewing projects like this are helping efforts to reverse declines. The central moorland core of the Regional Park has been designated a Special Protection Area because of the number of breeding Hen Harriers. More info: 01505 842803

HOPEFUL SIGN?

**10 MAY 2008
DISCOVERY OF
A SINGING
LESSER
WHITETHROAT
AT DYKEBAR BY
PAISLEY IS FIRST
IN A DECADE
AT THIS
LOCATION**

Road Verges Survey reveals diverse opportunities

In January 2008 Starling Learning submitted its report on an exploratory road verges survey completed over eight days in August 2007. Funded by the three local authorities and Scottish Natural Heritage, this survey sought to discover what contributions this extensive resource is making to biodiversity (particularly botanical

interest), to consider problems faced by wildlife living on road verges and to make some suggestions for improved management.

Whilst this was intended to be only a preliminary examination of the resource and the issues facing it, the 48 verges surveyed on the ground revealed more than

150 plant species between them. The best sites had more than 40 species each. Unusual species found included Spiguel, Wild Thyme, Harebell, Bog Myrtle, Scarlet Pimpernel, plus both Greater and Lesser Butterfly Orchid. The importance of associated linear habitats like hedges, ditches and walls was emphasised.



Road verges can provide opportunities for botanically rich grassland habitats to develop, including declining species like Yellow Rattle.



Inverclyde
Renfrewshire
East Renfrewshire
LBAP

bringing biodiversity back to basics

PROGRESS IN INVERCLYDE, EAST RENFREWSHIRE & RENFREWSHIRE

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The Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) is a partnership forum which aims to protect and enhance biodiversity in the area covered by the above local authorities. Simply put, biodiversity encompasses all the biological diversity or the variety of living things around us. The LBAP was launched in 2004 and includes 18 separate Action Plans for seven habitats and eleven individual species requiring special attention.

Members of the partnership forum include the Councils for Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde, Scottish Natural Heritage, Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Scottish Ornithologists' Club, RSPB, Paisley Natural History Society, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Forestry Commission, Finlaystone Estate, University of the west of Scotland, FWAG Scotland, Clyde Bat Group, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Botanical Society of the British Isles, Carts Greenspace, Lower Clyde Greenspace and Starling Learning.

Find us on the web:

www.renbap.paisley.ac.uk



Newsletter compiled & produced by Carts Greenspace
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www.cartsgreenspace.org.uk



Male House Sparrow revealing the species' confiding behaviour (photograph courtesy of Dr. P. Tatner).

HELP SAVE OUR SPARROWS!

One of the new Action Plans which the Biodiversity Partnership is developing is for the House Sparrow. People may be surprised that such a familiar bird needs any special attention but population figures show that the national population has dropped by more than half in the past 25 years.

Several reasons have been suggested for this national decline. Some people think that there has been a substantial loss of nest sites due to housing renewal schemes which seal up gaps in buildings and urban regeneration projects which remove derelict buildings altogether. Others suggest they suffer

reduced food supplies, particularly when trying to feed aphids to nestlings in spring. Some blame disease, others predation or pollution but scientists are still trying to discover the root causes.

Local populations have declined too, so we are trying to discover whereabouts in East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire House Sparrows can still be found.

Therefore we need you to contact us with information about where and when you see House Sparrows, what kinds of habitat are they using, what kinds of behaviour are they up to (e.g. nesting or feeding), plus any

other information you think might be important.

The Biodiversity Officer has developed a special House Sparrow Recording Form, copies of which can be obtained from the contact points shown above, but you can just phone or email us with information about your local populations.

Already we know of "Sparrow Strongholds" in Paisley town centre, Glenburn (also in Paisley), Gourrock, Inverkip and Park Mains in Erskine but, so far, we are alarmed by the fact that there don't seem to be any House Sparrows left in East Renfrewshire at all! Please tell us otherwise...