

life

falkirk biodiversity newsletter

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Falkirk Council
Development Services



The Falkirk Area
Biodiversity
Partnership

2011 has seen exciting work to tackle invasive species; discoveries of new species for this area; action for bogs, barn owls, local woodlands, rivers, meadows and much more. It's been a busy biodiversity year!

2012 brings the prospect of even more local biodiversity action as our new Biodiversity Action Plan gets into full swing. Watch this space!

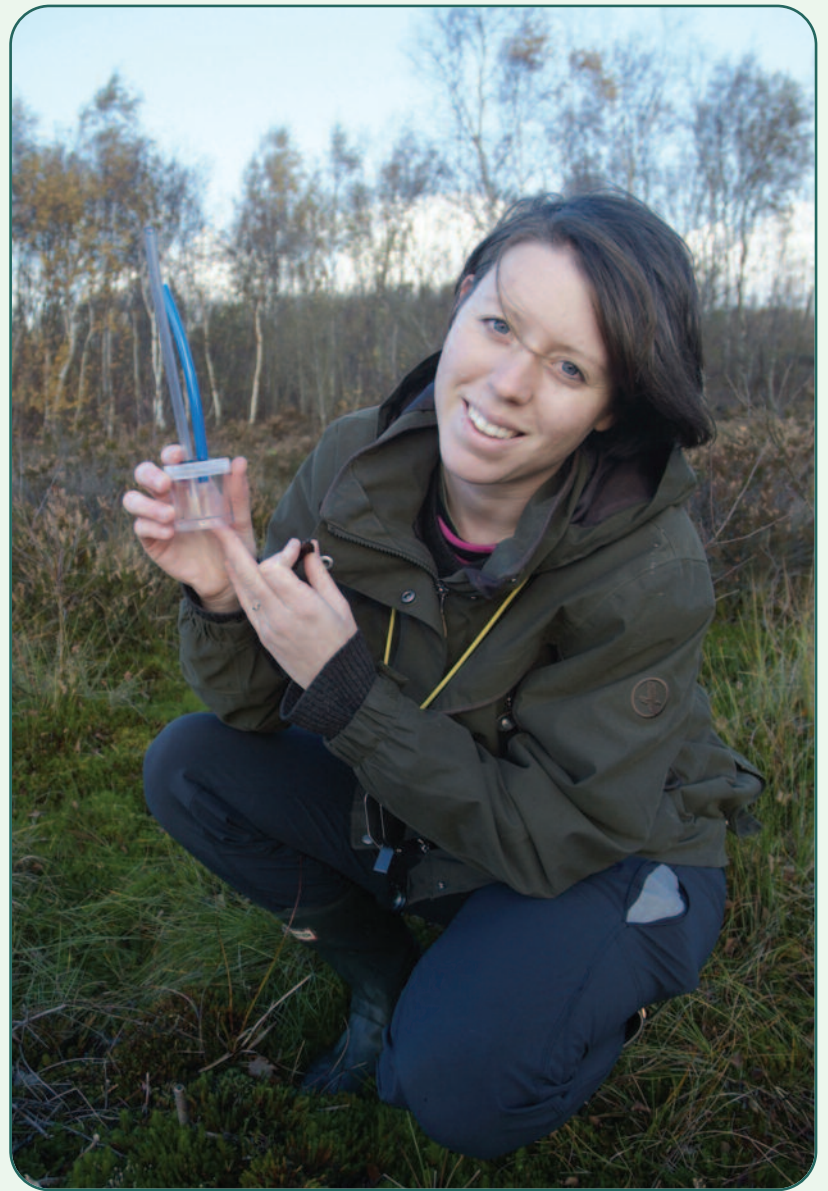


It's a FAB Action Plan!

The Falkirk Area Biodiversity (FAB!) Action Plan 2011-2014 has recently been published and is available to view on the Falkirk Council website (www.falkirk.gov.uk). The plan aims to focus and inspire action to conserve and protect our local biodiversity over the next three years. It has been produced with help from a broad range of individuals and organisations, many of them already involved in local or national conservation efforts. The support of these partners and many other local people and groups will be needed to successfully put the plan into action.

This action plan, which builds on work identified in the area's first biodiversity action plan in 2002, includes an ambitious programme of projects. These projects aim to help conserve and enhance some of our most important and valued plants, animals and habitats. They include peatland conservation, woodland management, grassland enhancement, great crested newt protection and lots more.

If you want to get involved in putting this plan into action and helping our precious local biodiversity please do get in touch. The plan is also available in paper or CD formats. For a copy contact the Biodiversity Officer – details on back page.



Showing Natural Talent

My name is Daisy Shepperd and I am the BTCV Natural Talent apprentice for lowland raised bogs. My 12-month apprenticeship is hosted by Butterfly Conservation Scotland and Buglife.

Lowland raised bogs are home to charismatic plants and animals but are also valuable for the ecological services they provide, such as flood management and carbon sequestration. Around 94% of lowland raised bogs in the UK have been destroyed within the last century. This is principally due to peat extraction, amongst other threats such as afforestation, burning and overgrazing.

Since January 2011, I have managed the "Bogs for Life"

project. The project aims to assess the condition of raised bogs in Central Scotland, learn more about wildlife on bogs, build partnerships with bog landowners, and raise the profile of these habitats. I have surveyed over 30 bogs around Stirling and Falkirk, collecting data on habitat condition and wildlife records. This data will be made available to local stakeholders and will include suggestions for appropriate management and restoration.

Being a Natural Talent apprentice has helped me grow in confidence, develop specialist skills, and build professional relationships. I have organised public events, led workshops, delivered talks and helped with practical conservation work. Working alongside expert ecologists has also helped me to develop my identification skills and I am now confident in using keys to identify a variety of taxa. I will continue to encourage others to protect these unique and important habitats throughout my career.

For more information about the Natural Talent Apprenticeship scheme visit www.btcv.org/naturaltalent

Making Meadows

In September, Buglife and 11 volunteers from the Co-operative, Green Routes, Enable and Falkirk Ranger Service planted 500 plug plants into a meadow at Roughcastle, near the Falkirk Wheel. They aimed to improve the variety of plant species in the meadow to attract a greater range of pollinating insects. The plants included species like Teasel, Oxeye daisy, Red campion and Yarrow. Since then further work has been done to sow Yellow rattle seed and remove scrub. Birch scrub close to the meadow has also been cleared to prevent it spreading into the meadow and to provide areas of bare ground for Green tiger beetles. Next year Buglife plan to plant more wildflowers of a wider range of plant species.

Meanwhile, Buglife have also been clearing birch scrub from a brownfield site at Forge Dam, next to Carron Dams SSSI. The cleared area is part of a solitary bee nesting site. Two solitary bee species have been identified here so far, *Andrena barbilabris* and the Red Data Book *Andrena ruficrus*. Clearing birch from this area will help to keep the bare ground clear for the solitary bees.



Aliens Among Us!



October 12th saw over 140 people meet in Grangemouth to discover the Aliens Among Us. They learnt how to identify aliens, the problems aliens can cause and how to control them!

Aliens (aka invasive, non-native species) can cause significant damage to our native wildlife and cost the economy huge amounts. This event, opened by Falkirk Council's Chief Executive Mary Pitcaithly, aimed to highlight the problem of invasive species and train people to identify them and take appropriate action to stop them

spreading. It explored a wide range of invasive species but paid particular attention to Japanese Knotweed.

The event, organised by the Falkirk Invasive Species Forum, was the first of its kind in this area, and attracted a wide range of participants including students, community representatives, businesses, staff from various Falkirk Council services, local residents, and representatives from other councils. It is hoped the participants will now be able to apply their knowledge of invasive species at home and work and educate others.

The event was sponsored by CATCA and funded by Falkirk Council and FET.

Meanwhile, a pilot project to eradicate Japanese Knotweed and other invasive weed species from our riverbanks is underway. The project, funded by Falkirk Council, is focusing on controlling the invasive weeds along the Castlerankine and Culloch Burns and will run for a number of years.

Know Your Knotweed!

The Falkirk Invasive Species Forum has recently published a leaflet which clearly illustrates how to identify Japanese Knotweed. It also lists some basic Do's and Don'ts if you do find this highly invasive non-native plant. For a copy of the leaflet contact the Biodiversity Officer or visit www.falkirk.gov.uk.



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Falkirk's Bog Sun-Jumper

It sound's like something your granny might knit you or maybe a regular at Glastonbury! It's actually an extremely rare spider and it's popped (jumped!) up near Falkirk.

This summer the bog sun-jumper spider, previously only known from three sites in the UK, has been found at two new sites in Scotland. It was discovered at Wester Moss near Stirling in July and after a careful check of various other sites was then found at Dunmore Moss near Airth. At Dunmore the species is surviving in a tiny remnant of habitat that has escaped destruction by peat stripping.

This beautiful spider measures just 3mm long. It is mainly black but has iridescent palps (mouthparts) that shine metallic green when caught by the sun. The spider is specially adapted for life on raised bogs. Unfortunately this means that, as raised bogs have become increasingly rare and fragmented, suitable homes for this spider have become few and far between.

Check, Clean, Dry

The Check, Clean Dry campaign was officially launched in Scotland this September. The UK-wide campaign will raise awareness and encourage responsible behaviour to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Species such as the 'killer shrimp' (which has already spread to England from Eastern Europe) and New Zealand pygmyweed can cause considerable damage to our native wildlife and have significant financial costs. The campaign will encourage water users such as anglers and canoeists to follow good biosecurity practices - checking, cleaning and drying their boats and equipment - to combat the spread of invasive species.

To receive a campaign poster for your fishing club, canoe club etc... or for more information contact the biodiversity officer.



Otter Spotter

Otters appear to be doing well on the rivers throughout the Falkirk area. Their presence is often confirmed by a sighting of a footprint or scat; it's rare to see the creatures themselves. However, this summer a couple of young otters were spotted by the Union Canal near Hallglen. The lucky wildlife spotter, Kevin Askew, sent in this photo.

What's On

Join in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch on 28th & 29th January 2012. More details at www.rspb.org.uk

Get in touch ...

**To find out more about biodiversity action in this area contact:
The Biodiversity Officer, Abbotsford House, David's Loan, Falkirk, FK2 7YZ.
Tel: 01324 504863
E-mail: biodiversity@falkirk.gov.uk**

If you have any news, articles, events or ideas for the next Biodiversity Newsletter please send them to the Biodiversity Officer by 31/3/12.

Photos courtesy of: Scott Paterson (RSPB), Daisy Shepperd, Suzie Bairner, Eddie/Cameras in the Community, GBNNSS, Lorne Gill/SNH, Kevin Askew, Falkirk Council.



Barn Owl Broods

The Falkirk Area Biodiversity Partnership's Barn owl nest box project has entered its fifth year. The project, led by the Falkirk Council Ranger Service, aims to increase the local barn owl population by providing much needed nesting sites for the birds. Building on the success of previous years, 2011 saw the new arrival of 8 barn owl and 8 kestrel chicks. The rangers, with the help of a

local volunteer bird ringer, have been actively monitoring and ringing the new chicks. This will help to build up a picture of the barn owl population locally and contribute to national monitoring. Locations for new barn owl boxes are still being sought. For more details or if you think you may have a suitable site for a nest box please contact the rangers: Tel. 01324 501017.



Polmont Woodlands Group

Polmont Woodlands Group has been working with Falkirk Council to oversee the long-term enhancement and management of Polmont Woods. The woodland, covering approximately 15 hectares, is located between the M9 motorway and Old Polmont. So far, much work has been undertaken with the assistance of WIAT funding, including improvement of paths, signage and interpretation, control of vehicle access to prevent fly tipping, removal of non-native species, planting native trees and

encouragement of natural regeneration of native species. The woodlands group was established in late 2008 and comprises of local residents and users of Polmont Woods; it is now working to become constituted with a view to undertaking further enhancement and management of the woods in the future. The group is open to everyone with an interest in the woods. Anyone interested in joining the group can contact Phillip Harris Tel: 01324 504713 or email: phillip.harris@falkirk.gov.uk