

Life

Falkirk Biodiversity Newsletter

issue 16 | summer 2014

Love our Ladybirds

CSGNT's biodiversity campaign for 2014 is called Love Our Ladybirds, celebrating the diversity of Scottish Ladybirds. Ladybirds are beetles, and though there are 46 species in the UK, only 26 of them are recognisable as ladybirds. Fifteen different species are found in Scotland, six of them are common and widespread, whilst the others are rarer and have very specific habitat requirements.

The campaign has 3 main elements: raising awareness through promotional activities and events; producing educational packs for schools; and undertaking practical habitat creation or enhancement projects for different species in suitable areas.

CSGNT has a stand ready to be taken around community events and given to community groups with a range of information, hints and tips and activities which can all help to improve gardens and public spaces for different Ladybirds. We have produced Love Our Ladybird packs for 150 primary schools in the area which are full of educational resources and tips on improving school grounds for ladybirds, survey guides, activity sheets and a kit to make a hibernation box. Finally, we will be running practical conservation days surveying sites for ladybirds, and creating or enhancing habitats for specific species.

More information on the campaign and how to get involved is available on CSGNT's website:
www.csgnt.org.uk/activities/love-our-ladybirds





Interested in Geology?

We want to hear from you...

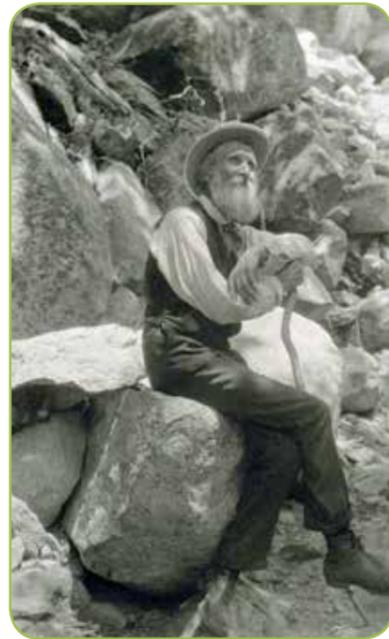
Falkirk Council is keen to hear from anyone who has an interest in geology. We are looking to prioritise and assess a number of Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) within the area. In order to achieve this, these sites need to be reviewed and assessed from volunteers. This would involve undergoing surveys and exploring the sites first hand. By taking part, you will get to visit interesting sites such as Bantaskine Park, Birkhill Mine, Cowden Hill Quarry and many more.

It is essential that sites of geological importance are designated as RIGS so that they can be protected. They are selected based on their educational value, historical significance and aesthetic qualities, particularly in relation to promoting public awareness and appreciation of Earth Sciences.

A number of sites have successfully been selected for initial designation within Central Scotland thanks to the hard work, commitment and enthusiasm of volunteers interested in protecting our Earth heritage. Therefore, it would be great working with people who want to help make a significant contribution to the areas in Falkirk. It is a great way to meet people and has benefits in physical and mental well being. The experience of contributing to the selection process will also give you a sense of ownership and pride of the area. If you find this opportunity appealing then we would love to hear from you.

If you would like to get involved please do not hesitate to get in touch, contact the Biodiversity Officer on 01324 504863 or email: anna.perks@falkirk.gov.uk.

What would John Muir have said?



The night before we set up a moth trap in the garden of a house close to the woods.

Fourteen moths were caught comprising 4 different species. The dawn chorus is wonderful during the spring. If you have never experienced it - set your alarm clock and do it - if only once.

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has a feeding station at Lionthorn and regularly nets birds for ringing. They did a bird ringing demonstration for the event. They caught the common woodland species, Willow Warblers and Chiff Chaffs, including one that had been ringed the week before in France. The BTO guys spotted 28 different bird species at Lionthorn, including a Kingfisher. After they had packed up, 2 Buzzards also turned up.

The weather was not particularly kind but 90 or so people turned up and had lots of fun with face painting, refreshments and a cuddly toy treasure hunt. Everyone was fascinated by the pond dipping with both Smooth and Palmate newts and the ferocious looking Great Diving Beetle Larvae regularly being netted.

The event ended with a bat walk at dusk. There were certainly many Pipistrelle bats and possibly some Soprano Pipistrelle bats but our detectors were not sophisticated enough to be sure.

In total over 100 different species of animal, plants and insects were identified. John Muir once said that, "In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks." I would like to think he would have been very happy with Nature-Fest and his bioblitz.

A big thank you to all the organisations and individuals who have supported and helped organise the events that have been part of Nature-Fest.

Dan Jackman
Nature-Fest
Steering Group Chair

Nature-Fest, Falkirk area's wildlife festival started its second year with 42 events from mid April to 21st June. The idea behind Nature-Fest is to pool the publicity and marketing for a range of nature themed events organised by local groups. The more people who attend the events and learn something, the better wildlife will be appreciated.

Lionthorn Community Woodland Association (LCWA) was set up to encourage the responsible use of the woods at Lionthorn, South Falkirk. LCWA's contribution to Nature-Fest was to organise a bioblitz on 4th May. A bioblitz is an event where you try to record as many wildlife species as possible in a set period. We decided dawn to dusk. We were also helped by Trust for Conservation Volunteers who have a Scotland Counts Project. They made available some very handy information packs produced by Open Air Laboratories. Did you know there are 26 different species of worms in the British Isles? I did not.

We called our bioblitz the John Muir Bioblitz because the John Muir Way goes through Lionthorn woods and it was an opportunity to tie in with various events celebrating the opening of a new long distance path. We were very fortunate to get funding from Scottish Natural Heritage and the Falkirk Environment Trust (for portaloo, marquee etc).

Inner Forth Landscape Initiative awarded HLF Grant

An ambitious and exciting project that aims to revitalise and celebrate the Inner Forth's key natural and historic features was awarded £1.9m by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in March 2014 and will officially begin delivery on 1st May 2014.

The Inner Forth Landscape Initiative is led by RSPB and the partnership also includes Scottish Natural Heritage, Falkirk Council, Stirling Council, Clackmannanshire Council, Central Scotland Green Network Trust, Sustrans, Historic Scotland and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

The Forth is internationally recognised as an important site for wildlife, with expansive mudflats providing refuge for thousands of wildfowl and wading birds in winter.

For centuries, the landscape has also been home to Scotland's industries, with evidence of ancient ports and harbours, salt pans, limekilns, mining and whisky production, sitting alongside the industries of today.

The Inner Forth Landscape Initiative (IFLI) will use the funding as part of a £4million programme over the next four years to help protect historic sites, connect fragmented wildlife habitats, improve access routes, and provide learning and volunteering opportunities through delivery of 50 integrated projects.

The IFLI will run from Bo'ness and Rosyth to Stirling, and aims to enhance this landscape, raise the profile of the area and encourage community participation in many aspects of local heritage.

The full project team will be in place soon and a variety of free opportunities open to all will start to be publicised over the summer months.

To find out more about the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative, please visit our website: www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk or contact:

Kate Fuller
IFLI Community Engagement Officer
01324 831 568
innerforth@rspb.org.uk



Kinneil Church, Bo'ness
An IFLI Project Location



Free Biodiversity Training Events

2014 heralds the third and final year of CSGNT's popular Biodiversity Training for Communities project, which is funded by SNH, Scottish Forestry Trust and Clyde & Avon Valley Landscape Partnership and supported by a range of charities and NGO's giving their time and expertise for free.

This year, 20 training events have been planned, covering topics from wildflower identification and foraging to invasive non-native species, peatland restoration and practical woodland management. They will be a mix of indoor and outdoor based sessions, with a strong emphasis on field work and practical experience. As before, all events will be free to attend and are aimed at members of community groups, or interested members of the general public, though are open to all.

The full programme and details of the individual events and how to book on can be found on the CSGNT website:

www.csgnt.org.uk/activities/community-training.

All events are free, but booking is essential.

Progress at Almond Bing

As part of the Falkirk Area Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2014 (FBAP), the Falkirk Council is managing a variety of local sites designated for their nature conservation value.

The aim is to protect and enhance the biodiversity value of the sites over the next 10 years through ongoing management.

Almond Bing is one site which has undergone a range of practical work in order to achieve this. There has been little active management on this site over the past 20 years which emphasises the urgent need for action.

The Wildlife Site is dominated by semi-natural broadleaved woodland with lesser areas of unimproved neutral grassland. These are rare in the central belt of Scotland and are classed as priority habitats under the FBAP.

The disused railway line and canal basin on the Brownfield site creates historic interest as they were used to transport coal.

Therefore, protecting the site is important with regards to both its nature conservation value and its mining transportation heritage.

Part of my role as the Trainee Assistant Biodiversity Officer has been to progress the management plan at Almond Bing.

I have worked closely with the Access Rangers to help carry out the practical work and ensure the conservation objectives are fulfilled. This has involved undertaking tasks such as litter picking, scrub clearance and removing invasive species.



The outcome is likely to be very influential in improving the biodiversity within the area. For example, controlling the scrub will allow both the open woodland and grassland habitat to mature naturally. We are hopeful that the diversity of species will increase as a result. Buglife have also provided further guidance on managing the site to ensure invertebrates thrive. This proved to be very helpful with ideas such as making banks for bees being advised.

This work will go a long way in helping to protect and enhance the biodiversity value at Almond Bing. However, if the number of species is to continue to rise then it is essential that the practical work is consistently carried out into the future.

This presents an opportunity for people to get involved in the 10 year management plan. If you are interested in taking part, it would be great to hear from you. I have thoroughly enjoyed managing Almond Bing and I look forward to seeing it progress along with the other locally designated sites within Falkirk.

For more information please contact the Biodiversity Officer.
anna.perks@falkirk.gov.uk or
01324 504863.

What's On

Check out the Falkirk Outdoor Events Diary 2014. This guide is packed with great outdoor activities for the whole family.

The John Muir Way has been launched. The coast to coast trail runs from Dunbar to Helensburgh but you can walk short stretches right across the Falkirk area.

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.

01324 504863 • 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 14/11/14.



Falkirk Council