



Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No.55



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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

Chairman's Report.

The summer season of Tower opening finished at the end of September with Doors Open Days. This year for the first time we had over 1000 visitors, so well done all volunteers! We had two very interesting evening talks in October and November, one on Climate Change, and one about the 'Leith Smacks'

The revised edition of our Corstorphine Hill book is currently at the printer, so hopefully it will be available to buy at the AGM in March.

Parks Day 28th October : most of the staff of CEC Parks and Greenspaces turned out on Corstorphine Hill to do a day's work clearing Salmonberry, replanting, and clearing paths, finishing off with a barbecue at the Tower. Thanks as ever to David Kyles for persuading them to choose us this year, and to all the staff for the work they did and continue to do to maintain the Hill and all the other Parks in the City.

You probably know that as part of the Living Landscapes Project the grass cutting regime has changed in many parks, including the Hill. The plan is that in the long term this will increase the diversity of plants and animals in the meadow areas, and make these areas more interesting to walk through. Most of the comments received so far have been positive, and if you have any comments or suggestions please pass them to us. My Park Scotland is a national project to publicise and develop Scotland's parks and greenspaces. There is a database on line giving information, at the moment covering only Edinburgh and Glasgow, but being extended in the future. My Parks will also help Councils and Friends Groups to raise money for projects in their parks. Visit the website at My Park Scotland

MEMBERSHIP Most memberships are due between January & March each year.

A reminder e-mail or letter will be sent outwith these dates.

We enclose/attach with this Newsletter a renewal membership form for completion and return with your membership fee/donation. It is important that we keep our files up to date each year, so your prompt return would be appreciated, this will also ensure that you get your Newsletter as usual. *Also we have enclosed (for people who get a paper copy of the Newsletter) a membership form which is aimed at NEW members, and we would ask that current members distribute it to neighbours, friends or people you think would be interested in our work. People on e-mail, perhaps you could interest a friend by copying the Newsletter to them. Thank you on behalf of the committee for your continued support.*

SPRING PROGRAMME



“Five Sisters Zoo” Talk

by Lesley Coupar at the Capital Hotel, Clermiston Road, Edinburgh.

Thursday 25th February 7.30pm

This private zoo just outside West Calder deserves to be much better known. It celebrates its first 10 years next year and has just opened a new Lion Enclosure. The zoo has rescued several large animals such as lions and bears from circuses in Europe where they were kept in poor conditions. They are now enjoying a happy retirement. Lesley will tell the story of the development of the zoo with stories of the animals and how they got there.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

**Our Annual General Meeting will take place on the 24th
March 2016 at the Dower House, St Margaret’s Park,
7.30pm**

After the meeting there will be a social get together with drinks and nibbles as a little thank you to all our volunteers for their work.



BIRD WALK

Saturday 9th April 9am – 11am

We will meet at the “Rest and Be Thankful” benches overlooking Murrayfield Golf Course.

We hope to see and hear:

Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Stock Dove and a total of 35-40 species.

HERB WALK by Dr Brian Moffat

Sunday May 15th

Meet at the Walled Garden 2pm



SPRING BIRD REPORT



Summer visitors to the Hill remained until late September, with the last **Swallow** sighted on 21st and **Chiffchaffs** and **Blackcaps** on 27th. A handful of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, which normally head to south to England or even as far as Iberia, have overwintered, and can be seen in the Fox Covert area.

The autumn migration began with a passage of **Meadow Pipits** in late August, and they continued to move south over the Hill until 17th September. Small numbers of **Siskins**, **Redpolls** and **Crossbills** were on the move throughout September and October, and the latter month saw a steady migration, high overhead, of **Skylarks**. Particular highlights included a party of 6 **Spotted Flycatchers** on 15th September, and a **Snipe** on 22nd September.

The first winter visitors as usual were **Pink-footed Geese**, with small advance skeins flying south on 16th September. The anticyclone of 26th/27th brought these birds in their thousands – of course, they don't land on the Hill, but they use it for navigation, and generally fly directly overhead before abruptly changing direction. **Redwings** – wintering thrushes which do alight and remain on the Hill – arrived on 9th October, and their larger cousins **Fieldfares** on 4th November. A good flock of **Common Gulls** has built up (around 50, feeding in the Fox Covert/Clermiston Park areas), and the regular wintering **Goosander** (about a dozen) can be seen at the foot of the Hill, on the Water of Leith near the ice rink.

Passing birds during the period included **Grey Heron**, **Oystercatcher**, **Peregrine**, **Raven**, **Grey Wagtail** and **Pheasant**. In September 49 species were recorded, 45 in October, 44 in November, 42 in December and 45 in January. The grand total for the Hill now stands at 93 species.

For latest sightings see: <http://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com>

Ian Moore

Friends of Corstorphine Hill thank the following for their funding:-



City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service Report Jan 2016

Rain, rain, go away....etc etc! It's been relentless of late and with the ground so saturated, any high winds may be devastating for our mature tree stock so a calm start to 2016 will be most welcome.

You may have been out and about on the 28th of October 2015 and encountered some members of staff from Parks and Greenspace who do not normally work on Corstorphine Hill as our now annual "Parks Day" was staged here. It was a hugely successful day with around 100 members of staff from varying service areas within Parks such as mechanics, joiners, botanical services staff, admin support, contracts officers and senior managers alike participating in conservation and other enhancement activities.



The main activity focussed around control of salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) which is an invasive non-native species severely impacting on the biodiversity within the LNR. It was first introduced to Scotland in 1827 as food for pheasants from North America and due to its attractive appearance people adopted it into their gardens and local populations have escaped. Topography, soil and moisture conditions on Corstorphine Hill are ideal for this particular woody shrub to dominate. Native populations of bluebell, snowdrops, campion, wood anemone and others have been significantly reduced over the time of the spread of salmonberry. Control measures adopted include cutting, digging and burning and treatment of re-growth with herbicide. This measure will continue for a number of years and will form the basis of nature conservation actions within the updated site management plan.

Other activities planned for early 2016 include maintenance of drainage infrastructure and paths and surfacing underneath picnic tables and seats to avoid erosion/grass and other vegetation growing

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