



Friends of Corstorphine Hill NEWSLETTER No.66



Autumn/Winter 2019 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

Chairman's Report.

A happy event, Rowan Muir, a new member of our committee gave birth to a daughter, Morven Evie on July 1st. The family are all well.

Summer Walks

Hill Highlights walk was in June in good weather and about 20 people joined me.

The Family Insect/ bug hunt was in July, and with the assistance of David and Sarah Adamson, about 30 children, ages 2-12 years, and their parents and grandparents joined us in the Garden to catch and identify small animals. They found bees, bumblebees, beetles, hoverflies, spiders, a few butterflies, woodlice, and a millipede. The weather was kind and we all had great fun!

The Tree Walk led by Brian was a victim of the August weather – it poured! A few hardy souls turned up and had a fairly brief walk around the Garden and surroundings.

Tower Visitors

We had good visitor numbers, up to 70 on one Sunday, during May, June and July. August was, as you know unusually wet and we cancelled two Sundays and curtailed a third after an hour. Hopefully September will be better, especially for Doors Open Days when we will open as usual.

Last year we had around 400 visitors on the two days.

Thanks to all our volunteers for looking after the Garden, leading the walks, managing the website and Facebook pages, opening the Tower on Sundays, and particularly to David Kyles Natural Heritage Officer who keeps the Hill in good shape working very hard himself and recruiting many teams of volunteers to pick litter, control invasive species, repair fences etc. etc.

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Note: We are now on Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. Search for FOCH or Friends of Corstorphine Hill where you can check for event news.

AUTUMN/WINTER PROGRAMME

All talks are at the Leonardo Murrayfield Hotel, Clermiston Road.
at 7.30pm



Wednesday 23rd October



“The Work of the Friends of Cammo”.
A talk by Nick Benge,
Chairman of Friends of Cammo.

Tuesday 3rd December.

“Riverlife- The Wildlife of the Forth Catchment”

A talk by David Eastwood,
Forth Rivers Trust

This important talk will give all the dynamics of the wildlife within
our district.



Date for your Diary in 2020.....

Wednesday 18th March



“Travels in Chile” A talk by George Anderson {Beechgrove Garden}

The talk recounts a visit George made to Chile with the Friends of The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and includes the journey by Boat, by Coach, and by Boat across the Andes into Argentina to what seems like a chocolate heaven.

SUMMER/AUTUMN BIRD REPORT



Anyone strolling on a dewy autumn morning will marvel at the myriad spiders that occupy the gorse on the south side of Corstorphine Hill; every inch of the bushes appear to be smothered in glistening webs. Yet over half of this important habitat has been destroyed by fire during the past two years, with almost forty separate incidents, many perhaps negligent, some certainly deliberate. Up to fourteen species of birds breed here, most notably a small population of Long-tailed Tits. These beautiful creatures camouflage their domed feather nests with cobwebs and lichen. Sadly, they appear to have been lost, with no sightings since early May. The extensive habitat degradation has also produced a summer without breeding Linnets or Willow Warblers; their uplifting songs have been missed. So it is not only the Amazon rainforest and the Siberian taiga that is suffering a reduction in biodiversity; it is happening on our very doorstep.

On a more positive note, local populations of Swifts and House Martins appear to have had a good breeding season, with a fairly evenly mixed flock of about eighty birds gathering to feed over the hill during the second half of August and into early September. At the same time, another species that relies upon a supply of airborne insects, the Spotted Flycatcher, has been recorded on six separate occasions. It is a passage migrant, probably from Scandinavia, that stops off to fatten up en route to its African wintering grounds south of the equator.

By the time of publication, visitors to the hill will almost certainly have heard the first chattering of Pink-footed Geese, as great straggling skeins take advantage of anticyclonic conditions to make the flight down from their breeding grounds in Iceland. With a lifespan of around eight years, they learn the route, and use Corstorphine Hill as a navigational beacon, flying directly overhead and turning right for Galloway and left for East Lothian. Listen for the high-pitched 'seep' of Redwings on calm October nights, another Icelandic bird, some of which will spend the winter on the hill, first making short work of the holly berries. Autumn 2018 was a 'Waxwing Year', with many thousands of these spectacular birds irrupting to Scotland (and 100 took up residence near the Co-op in Balgreen Rd) – take a closer look at any flocks of 'Starlings' that land in the Rowan trees!

Ian Moore For regular flora & fauna updates visit: <https://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com> or connect via the 'web links' page on the FoCH website.

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



City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service Report.

Update on activities across Corstorphine Hill Local Nature Reserve:

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

Lots of attention and effort has been given towards the control of invasive species this season. Late summer has focussed on Himalayan balsam removal – this activity stops once the seed pods develop to lessen unnecessary spread. Focus then turns to salmonberry clearance as we are now out with nesting season and rather than just clearing the growth along path edges, large dense stands can be tackled. We've had lots of help this year from RBS, Sainsbury's Bank, Baillie Gifford, PWC, the Green Team, the Conservation Volunteers, Lothian Conservation Volunteers and the Dirty Weekenders! We've also had support from CEC Greenspace Teams treating the large stand of Japanese knotweed at the northern end of the hill. Some special thanks go to Nigel Rose, a local volunteer and avid hill user who has taken upon himself to clear some path edge stands of salmonberry contributing greatly to the wider cause and long-term control of INNS – if you see him, be sure to pass on your appreciation, thanks for your efforts Nigel, every little bit helps!

General Site Management

Costs sought to alleviate water run-off in north eastern areas of the hill. Works will include some juvenile tree removal, ditch creation and enlargement.

Through a combination with invasive clearance activities, path edge vegetation has been cut back along the narrower routes.

Several rope swings have been cut down across the site. If we encounter these, they will be removed as best as we can. There have been incidents in the past where injuries and fatalities have occurred directly related to unauthorised rope swings and our policy is to remove.

Queensferry Road entrance continually litter picked – the windblown litter there is almost continuous!

Water eroded paths repaired and pothole filled at Clermiston Rd N car park.

Fly-tipped carpet removed from western slopes.

Recently, our service highlighted through local media channels the responsibilities of dog owners when out in parks or the countryside and the sometimes “overlooked behaviours” some dogs display that restrict access for others, see

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-49565944> for more information.

As always, happy to hear from anyone on hill or environmentally related matters – good or bad!

**David Kyles - City of Edinburgh Council Forestry and Natural Heritage –
Natural Heritage Officer - Inverleith Farmhouse, Inverleith Park, 5 Arboretum
Place, Edinburgh, EH3 5NY - 0131 529 2421 -**

[http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks and green spaces](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks_and_green_spaces)