



pentland hills
regional park

PentlandBeacon

Bi-annual newsletter of the Pentland Hills Regional Park / Issue 43

Spring / Summer 2015

MOORLANDS AND THE RED GROUSE

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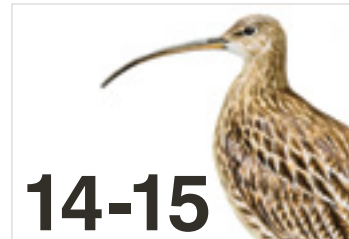
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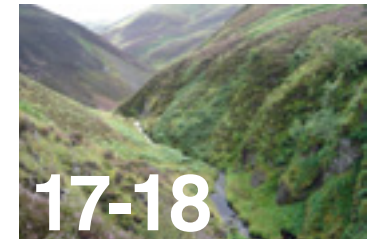
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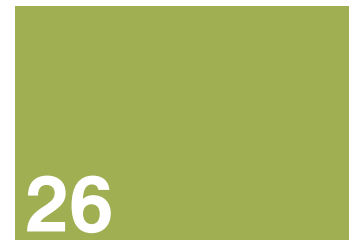
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Pentland Hills Regional Park

DONATION SCHEME

The Pentland Hills Regional Park covers an area of 10,000 hectares with over 100km (62 miles) of paths.

Approximately 500,000 people enjoy recreation in the park every year; walking, cycling, horse riding and fishing to name but a few of the recreational activities.



The staff that manage the Regional Park carry out a large number of projects in order to increase the visitor's enjoyment. These include:

- path construction and maintenance
- signage and waymarking
- installation of access gates
- habitat improvements for wildlife
- improvement of facilities at visitor centres and other popular sites.

There is always more to do than resources allow. This is where the Donations Scheme can help.

The Donations Scheme is a simple way for people to put something back into the Regional Park. The scheme allows people to make a general donation for environmental improvements in the Park.

All funds raised are used only for new 'added value' projects on the ground and not for the day to day running of the service.

Completed projects:

- Upgrading of steps leading into Bonaly Country Park from Torduff Reservoir (2012).
- A new recycled plastic seat for the Flotterstone Glen (2011).
- 500 copies of the 'Horse Riding in the Pentland Hills Regional Park' leaflet (2010).

For more information and to donate visit the Regional Parks website: www.pentlandhills.org

'Approximately 500,000 people enjoy recreation in the park every year; walking, cycling, horse riding and fishing to name but a few of the recreational activities.'

Bonaly Woodland Planting

Since the last update in Beacon 42, a lot has happened on the lower slopes around Bonaly Country Park. At the time of writing, the last of some 20,000 trees are being planted in the Park which will see the completion of the project.

The actual work on the ground began in mid-September with gorse clearance in the two smaller planting areas which lie below Torduff Hill. By removing the gorse the trees will experience less competition for light and



other resources whilst they become established. The ground was then mounded with an excavator to produce a raised, vegetation free spot, on which the planting then took place. As these two areas are relatively small, the most cost effective way to prevent deer browsing the trees was to protect them with plastic tree tubes, once the trees grow out of the tubes their crowns will be above the height that roe deer can easily reach to browse.

The majority of the slope lying between Bonaly Scout Camp

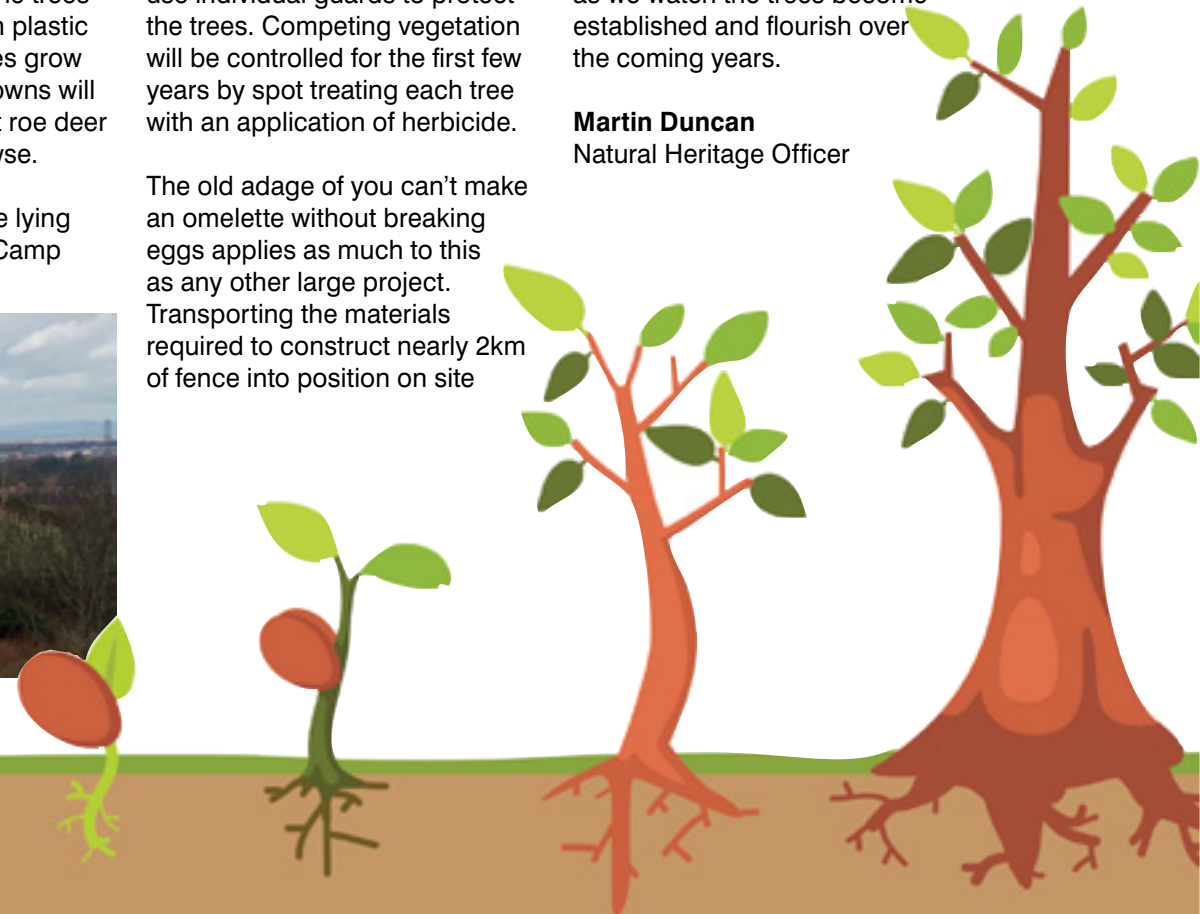
and the top of White Hill Wood has been tackled in a different way. The area here is larger and also visible from much further afield. For these reasons it was more appropriate to enclose the planting area within a rabbit and deer-proof fence and not use individual guards to protect the trees. Competing vegetation will be controlled for the first few years by spot treating each tree with an application of herbicide.

The old adage of you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs applies as much to this as any other large project. Transporting the materials required to construct nearly 2km of fence into position on site

resulted in the deterioration of some of the existing path surfaces. Following the completion of the planting phase of the works these issues will be rectified.

I'm sure all will agree that the hard work has been worth the effort as we watch the trees become established and flourish over the coming years.

Martin Duncan
Natural Heritage Officer



Pentland Inspirations

Art and Photographic Competition 2014

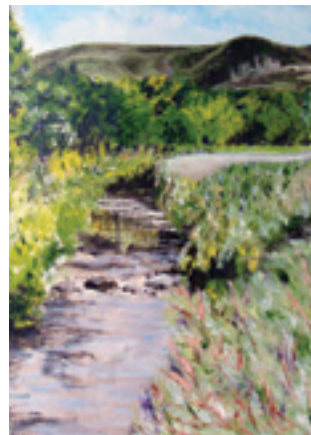
Winners

Best Landscape and Overall Competition Winner



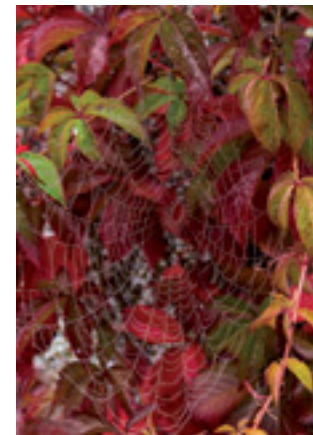
Stuart Macfarlane
'On a Cold and Frosty Morning'

Best Art



Patricia Daly
'Braidburn Valley'

Best Biodiversity



Mike Clarke
'Verginia Web'

Best Activity Photograph



Dave Henniker
'Pentland Paragliders'

The sixth Pentland Inspirations Art & Photographic Competition award ceremony took place in late November where this year's winners were announced.

The 2014 competition saw 79 photographs and five paintings being entered. The judges found the entries this year to be inspiring, thought provoking and technically excellent.

The four categories were:

Best Landscape and Overall Competition Winner
Best Art
Best Activity Photograph
Best Biodiversity

The ceremony was held at Swanston Brasserie, with Councillor Bill Henderson giving out the awards.

Pentland Inspirations

Art and Photographic Competition 2014

Commended

Commended Landscape



Steve Chambers
'Boats on North Esk Reservoir'

Commended Activity Photograph



Benjamin Panulo
'Amira 2'

Commended Biodiversity



David Newton
'Fungi'

Commended Art



James Haggart
'Swanston Conservation Area'

We would like to thank our two sponsors; Mount Parnassus Picture Framing who gave all entrants a 15% discount on picture frames and Cicerone Publishing who provided the Pentland Hills guide book as a prize for the winners.

As with the previous competitions, the entries have formed an inspiring exhibition that is on tour at venues across Edinburgh, the Lothian's and South Lanarkshire, with viewing of the exhibition free of charge at all venues.

The exhibition started in December at Harlaw House Visitor Centre and will finish in West Lothian in May. Full details are available on the Pentland Hills Regional Park website www.pentlandhills.org

Enjoy viewing the exhibition and hopefully if you haven't entered this time, the entries will inspire you to enter in 2016!

Paula Newton
Natural Heritage Officer

Moorlands and the Red Grouse

Moorlands are upland areas with acidic, low nutrient and water logged soils. These peaty, ericaceous soils are low in oxygen and offer perfect conditions for heather to grow vigorously and dominate the Regional Park landscape. The three main varieties of heather that can be found in the Pentland Hills are Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) and bell heather (*Erica onerea*).

Moorlands are highly managed landscapes. Through autumn to early spring planned burning occurs, known as Muirburn, by land managers to encourage new growth, creating a mosaic of aged heather for ground cover, ground nesting sites and to provide a food source. The vigour of the heather is achieved by this controlled burning, if left unmanaged heather can become leggy, thin and lack nutritional



value for red grouse that use it as a food source. Careful burning is required to ensure fires don't burn too long or fiercely as this can damage heather and the seeds as well as setting fire to the peaty soil. Recovery of which can be slow.

Grouse moorland management includes an element of predator control, allowing ground nesting birds such as red grouse, lapwing and curlew to successfully rear their young from predation such as foxes and carrion crows.

Bracken on moorlands can lead to significant loss of habitat where it gains a foothold and spreads quickly, competing out other vegetation. It is a preferred habitat for ticks as they love the thick matted rotten fronds and these tick bites can cause weakness or death to sheep and grouse from a virus that attacks their nervous system.

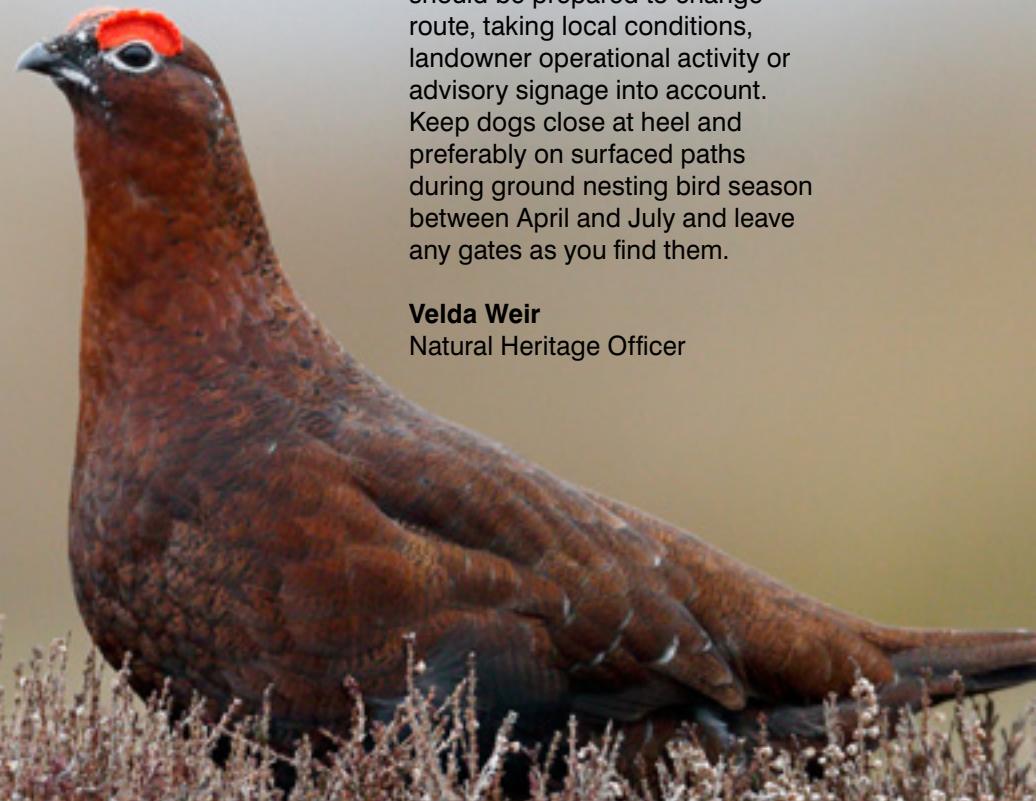
Swathes of heather moorland provide a very specific habitat for a variety of mammals, ground nesting birds and insects. A primary species in moorlands is red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*), which is one of 16 subspecies of the willow grouse and is only found in the British Isles and Ireland. Its name is derived from the Greek 'Lagos' meaning Hare and 'Pous' meaning foot which draws comparison to the furry feet of hares or rabbits.

The red grouse is a bird of open moorland; resident all year round and thrive on well managed moors. They use the short new shoots of heather as a food source and nest in scrapes on the ground around April and May producing up to 10 eggs. Grouse are susceptible to predation and any gamekeeper managing the moorland will control common predators to assist in good local population of ground nesting birds. Young grouse develop wings and strength to fly in a matter of just a few weeks to help them avoid dangers.

Shooting season for grouse begins 12 August annually and ends early December. Local grouse populations are managed and maintained for healthy breeding stock in future years to encourage a growth in population in a favourable and healthy environment.

When visiting the Park, you can play your part in helping maintain a healthy moorland; demonstrate responsible access when out walking, cycling, horse riding or dog walking, by being mindful of the time of year and by becoming aware of the agricultural and ground nesting calendar. Visitors should be prepared to change route, taking local conditions, landowner operational activity or advisory signage into account. Keep dogs close at heel and preferably on surfaced paths during ground nesting bird season between April and July and leave any gates as you find them.

Velda Weir
Natural Heritage Officer



Harlaw Hydro

The Victorians built Harlaw and Threipmuir Reservoirs not to supply drinking water but to provide South West Edinburgh with reliable power. The small but reasonably fast flowing Water of Leith was being used to drive water wheels (70 in its heyday) but during dry periods when there was not enough water, the reservoirs provided storage that could gather water in times of plenty and release it in times of need, providing a more reliable power source.



In 2009 a Balerno Village Trust consultation found that there was interest in reviving the Water of Leith as a source of green energy and in time honoured fashion a sub-committee was formed. A feasibility study, funded through a grant from the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES), confirmed that a micro-hydroelectric scheme at the outflow of Harlaw Reservoir was viable. Expense was kept to a minimum with team members giving their skills and time freely.

Circa £350,000 of capital was required to make the dream a reality. With the help of Cooperative Development Scotland, Harlaw Hydro Limited, a cooperative society for the benefit of the community was established in 2012. In 2013 the public was invited to join the society and to buy shares in the venture. This appeal was spectacularly successful raising all the capital, most of it local to the Water of Leith.

In 2015 Harlaw Hydro Ltd expects to generate its first kilowatts of power, green energy feeding into the national grid. It is estimated that the 95kW hydro scheme will generate enough electricity for approximately 56 homes and save 129 tonnes of carbon p.a. Surplus income from the scheme will be channelled through Balerno Village Trust for the benefit of the community.

With the Pentlands Regional Park Service, Harlaw Hydro is planning a real time information display for the Harlaw Visitors Centre which it is hoped will be both interesting and educational.

www.harlawhydro.org.uk

Lambing Season

By the time this issue of the Pentland Beacon is in circulation, spring will have hopefully arrived, writes Paula Newton.



The Regional Park is a beautiful place to visit in spring, with the landscape changing colour, the sounds of birds looking for mates and the sight of new born lambs bleating on the hills.

Every spring thousands of lambs will be born not only in the lowland areas of the Park (predominately fenced enclosures) but also on the open upland hills where the sheep move around freely. Lambing traditionally takes place from late March through April and May. It is during these months that the lambs are most vulnerable; being abandoned by their mothers (ewes), attacked by foxes, exposure to cold and wet weather. This is why it is essential that visitors and their dogs do their very best to not cause any more issues for ewes and their lambs.

The main consequences of dogs coming into contact with sheep are; the animals are chased – this can lead to death by exhaustion especially if spring has followed on from a harsh winter with little vegetation to eat, animals being attacked leading to injuries or death, and lambs being abandoned from their mothers due to being separated after a dog has chased them.

It is not only dogs but visitors that can cause issues; visitors will see a solitary lamb crying out for its mother, presume it has been abandoned and pick up the lamb. Once the smell of a human has been placed onto a lamb, it is very likely that the mother will not accept it back and the farmer will either need to encourage another mother to accept it or hand rear it themselves. If you come across a potential abandoned lamb please leave it and contact the local farmer or the Regional Park Service with a detailed description of the location.

The lambing initiative in conjunction with Police Scotland will run again this year in the Regional Park. Signs will be erected at access points, fliers will be handed out by Regional Park staff and Police Officers and this year a new poster will be sent out to local vets to highlight the consequences of sheep worrying.

Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953

Subject to the provisions of the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act, 1953, if a dog worries livestock on any agricultural land, the owner of the dog, and, if it is in the charge of a person other than its owner, that person also, shall be guilty of an offence.

For the purposes of this Act worrying livestock means:

- attacking livestock, or
- chasing livestock in such a way as may reasonably be expected to cause injury or suffering to the livestock or, in the case of females, abortion, or loss of or diminution in their produce, or
- being loose (that is to say not on a lead or otherwise under close control) in a field or enclosure in which there are sheep.

If a dog is identified to be worrying livestock, the keeper and any person in charge of the dog at that time can face a fine and a court can make order for the dog to be destroyed. The owner of the livestock may also take direct action at the time including shooting the dog to protect their stock.

Paula Newton
Natural Heritage Officer

Sheep worrying

Sheep worrying can occur at any time of the year and is when a dog chases or attacks a sheep.

Ewes can suffer a miscarriage if chased by a dog. (November – April)	The cost of one lamb being killed is £80 – £100 .
Ewes and their lambs can become separated if chased by dogs, resulting in the ewes abandoning their lambs.	Ewes usually have two lambs per year. Over six years = 12 lambs. Cost of ewe being killed = £1,200 in loss of potential earnings.

Please visit the Pentland Hills Regional Park but keep your dog on a short lead or close at heel at all times.





Moorland
CALLING

Jessica Morgado discovers the sights and sounds of spring in the Pentland Hills.



At the time of writing this article, the snow is falling in Edinburgh but it did not last very long with the sun melting it all before the children could have a chance to play.

It feels like spring is in the air when walking in woodlands around the city: birds are singing, leaves have started to unfurl on trees, snowdrops cover the ground with a spectacular display of green and white and there is a distinctive garlic smell following you when wild garlic is stepped on.

Looking at the Pentland Hills from the city, snow is lingering in some of the shady peaks and when walking there you can easily be caught in a squally snow shower which will leave your ears smarting from the cold!

Spring comes grudgingly to these high and exposed places and wildlife has to adapt to survive the moorlands.

Soon enough, you should be able to hear a concert of calls coming from the brown grass and heather covered grounds. When the time has come to mate, birds need to defend their territory and songs form a crucial part of this defence. In woodlands, birds perch on trees to call out their territory but in the moorland, birds have to do it from the ground or from the air. Often enough, some species will have aerobic displays along with a song which you might be lucky to witness.

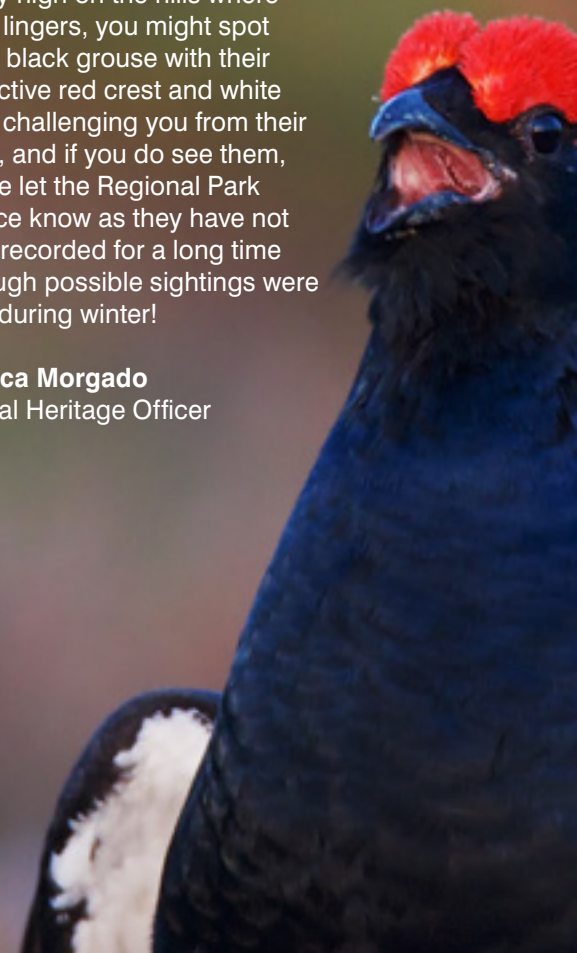
If you walk around Threipmuir you might hear peculiar calls coming from the fields and see Lapwings jumping off the ground flying in loops in the sky. Quite spectacular!

Watch out for Curlews whose brown and white complex feather pattern help them blend into the moorland. They return to the hills to nest after a winter spent in wetlands and along coastal habitats.

Perhaps you will be lucky enough to hear Cuckoos around the woodlands of Bonaly Country Park, which lay eggs in Meadow Pipits nests in the surrounding heather moorland.

Finally high on the hills where snow lingers, you might spot some black grouse with their distinctive red crest and white rump challenging you from their rocks, and if you do see them, please let the Regional Park Service know as they have not been recorded for a long time although possible sightings were seen during winter!

Jessica Morgado
Natural Heritage Officer



More Wildlife?

Victor Partridge investigates whether there is more wildlife in the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

Back in November I attended a meeting to discuss the next City of Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan. This plan is very important for us and many other conservation organisations as it sets out objectives to help protect wildlife over the next few years. In the meeting we also looked back at the success of the work carried out for the present plan, 2010 to 2015 and someone asked a very good question “So is there more wildlife in Edinburgh now?” This got me thinking - is there more wildlife in the Pentland Hills Regional Park?

The short answer is, we do not know.



The problem is, monitoring populations of animals is very time consuming, either involving capturing, marking and releasing animals or following strict scientific methods which require regular counting and data analysis.



Even species we survey regularly, like the green hairstreak butterfly, we do not know if the population is going up or down. What we can say, is each year we are finding more locations where they occur, but due to their small size, colour and fast flight, they have probably been there all the time and we just have not noticed them!

What do we know?

We have records for 914 species of plants and animals in the Regional Park – although this is not a comprehensive list as it lacks at least two species we know are present but are so common that no one has actually recorded them – rabbit and grey squirrel!

We know the population of junipers has increased by 800 since 2008 and that is because the Regional Park Service and the Friends of the Pentlands have planted them. There are also many more tree species, planted by several landowners. The Pentland Hills lacks woodland for wildlife, so we can assume that this increase has helped, particularly woodland birds to colonise different parts of the hills.

The lack of old trees means there are fewer holes for birds to nest in, so we have put up bird and bat boxes in all the woods managed by the Service.

Another habitat we manage is wildflower meadows; one at Hillend Country Park and the other at Bavelaw Marsh. These meadows are cut, raked and arisings removed to improve the biodiversity of these sites.

We also carry out scientific monitoring for species such as breeding birds on Bonaly Moorland in April, May and June. However, we have never analysed the data, as again this would be quite a considerable amount of work. If you are a student looking for a research project, we have plenty of information for you to analyse.

It is not always necessary to do something practical to help wildlife. One thing we can all do as visitors especially if you have a dog, is keep yourself and pet to the surfaced paths over the moorland during bird nesting season (April to July). Moorlands are one of the most important habitats in the Pentland Hills

and are home to many species of birds that nest on the ground; skylark, meadow pipit, red grouse, curlew and lapwing. The eggs or chicks of these birds can become cold and die if the adults are disturbed from their nest.

What would a walk over the hills be like without the sound of singing birds?

So we may not be able to provide statistical analysed evidence to prove that there is more wildlife in the Park, but with the work of the landowners, Friends of the Pentlands and ourselves, there should be more flora and fauna for us all to enjoy.

If you are a visitor to the Regional Park who spots wildlife or has records which might be useful, please send them in and include animals and plants that you think are common, it all helps.

If you wish to find out more about the work carried out to improve biodiversity in the Regional Park, our annual Nature Conservation Reports are available on our website www.pentlandhills.org.uk.

Victor Partridge
Natural Heritage Officer

Pentland Path Survey

When visiting the Pentland Hills Regional Park, do you ever think about what surface you are walking, cycling or riding on?

Often we do not notice unless the paths are particularly muddy or uneven, but the quality of path surface and other infrastructure, for example, stiles and gates all add to providing a good experience in the hills.

The Pentland Hills Regional Park is popular with many different types of recreational

users; walkers, runners, cyclists, anglers and horse riders, as well as being used for land management purposes, for example, forestry and farming. This means the Regional Park's path network needs to be suitable for many different purposes.

An estimated 600,000 – 800,000 people a year visit the Regional Park – that's a lot of feet, wheels and hooves. Add to this the wind, rain, snow and ice and you get a lot of path erosion.

A path condition survey was carried out in 2006 by the then Pentland Hills Ranger Service. Since then, path erosion has increased, with repairs, maintenance, and upgrades being carried out by staff, contractors, volunteers and the Friends of the Pentlands only when money has been available.

At present a new path survey has been commissioned, using money made available by the City of Edinburgh Council's cycling revenue project bank fund. The money is paying

for a survey to look at path erosion, drainage and path structure on four of the worst erosion effected routes. The results will then provide detailed specifications for improvements to the paths, including costs for path upgrades and provide a basis to apply for grant money to pay for the work required. This ensures the popular Pentland Path network will be maintained for future walkers, cyclists, horse riders and runners to enjoy.

Susan Dickson
Senior Natural Heritage Officer





SITES OF
SPECIAL
SCIENTIFIC
INTEREST

Habbies Howe – Logan Burn

The Pentland Hills Regional Park is a hugely important area in its own right. We are all aware of

this and work hard to ensure it remains that way. Included within the Regional Park are many landscape designations such as Country Parks, Areas of Great Landscape Value and hopefully soon a designated Local Nature Reserve amongst others. The Park also has three designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Habbies Howe – Logan Burn, North Esk Valley and Balerno Common.

A SSSI is an area of land and/or water that Scottish Natural Heritage considers to best represent the nations natural heritage – it can be designated due to the diverse range of plants, animals or general habitat that the area supports, it can be rocks, landforms and underlying strata or combinations of these natural features.

SSSI designations occur under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and are protected by law.

It is an offence for any person to intentionally or recklessly damage the protected natural features of a SSSI.

In this issue, focus will be given to one of the three SSSI's, with the next two editions of the Pentland Beacon covering the remaining SSSI's.

Habbies Howe – Logan Burn (SSSI) is located close to Loganlea Reservoir, below Scald Law. A good combination of geology and geomorphology has resulted in a site with a variety of important bryophyte and lichen habitats. The site is of great regional importance as the only known Lothian locality for a number of species.

The site has a long history of bryophyte recording, with an exceptionally large number of species recorded for such a small area in eastern Scotland (288 species). Of these, 14 species are nationally scarce in the UK, including montane base-loving species such as the fringed extinguisher-moss.



Point 5 - Aug 2014



There have been 150 species of lichen recorded, including 15 that are nationally scarce in the UK.

The damp conditions of this site is also favourable for several lime-loving species which are uncommon in Scotland; burnet rose, rock rose, hairy rockcress, mossy saxifrage and limestone bedstraw. Other plant species found on the site include wood sorrel, greater woodrush, water avens, woodruff, meadowsweet and valerian. Some scrub cover remains on the steep slopes of the SSSI where grazing is limited. The scrubland comprises of juniper, birch, rowan and aspen, and is an important relict with species typical of formerly extensive woodland. Although small, the site encompasses a habitat which is rare in the Lothian area, with its distinctive vegetation harbouring some interesting insect species including the locally rare money spider and a running foliage spider.

A management agreement was in place until recently (2013) which ensured the majority of the site was fenced off and grazing was kept to a minimum. This also protected the area from denudation caused by walkers and cyclists. Light grazing will be beneficial, aimed at maintaining a suitable level of natural scrub regeneration while preventing excessive poaching and scrub development. Vegetation surveys are undertaken approximately every 15 years with one due imminently. Annual fixed point photography assists with site monitoring. In 2009, 30 juniper seedlings were planted by the then Pentland Hills Ranger Service.

Efforts are now being made to review the effectiveness of recent management with a view to forming a new agreement aimed at protecting this small but very special part of the Regional Park for many years to come.

David Kyles
Natural Heritage Officer

Area REPORT

South Pentlands

Repairs have been undertaken on stiles located on the circular Nine Mile Burn / Monks Rig Pentland Path route. Additional way-marker has been installed and a review of existing directional signage is currently underway.

Constructive meetings have taken place with one of the landowners in the Carlops area, aimed at improving access across a tricky bit of hillside above the River North Esk which is promoted as a Pentland Path.

With the help of the Friends of the Pentlands and with permission from the landowner, we hope to improve access on the path to the north of North

Esk Reservoir towards the Borestone, improving drainage and installing some new gates later in 2015.

Improvements to the Fairliehope Bridge over the River North Esk have been discussed with various landowners and local community volunteers. Given the poor access and fairly major improvements required attention has now turned to investigating financing such a project and the possibility of applying for grant aided funding to do so. Hopefully, more news will be forthcoming on this project towards the end of the year.

David Kyles
Natural Heritage Service



Area REPORT

Harlaw / Bonaly / Dreghorn / Castlelaw areas

Since September, a major woodland expansion project has been taking place in Bonaly Country Park, on the northern slope of White Hill and Sanctuary Wood. Approximately 20,000 trees have been planted, consisting of 70% broadleaf and 10% conifer species.

The remaining 10% has been allocated as open space to allow the trees space to grow. For further information please read Martin Duncan's article in this edition.

Another large project taking place at Bonaly is the replacement of the 500 metre fence running from Torduff Reservoir to the top of Sanctuary Wood. The work will be completed by the end of March.

Over the years this fence has been vandalised and repaired countless times and is no longer fulfilling its purpose as a stock proof fence, keeping the grazing sheep out of the main area of the Country Park. The new fence will include the installation of two stiles, one to access the orienteering marker and the other at the summit of Torduff Hill where the most damage takes place on the fence. People will now be able to access the rocky summit easily without the need to break the fence.

Over the winter there have been quite a few storms that have seen numerous trees either fall or become dangerous at Bonaly and Harlaw. Thankfully the City of Edinburgh Council's forestry squads and those in the

Regional Park Service qualified to use a chainsaw, have made all the trees safe. Many visitors to the Park may find seeing fallen trees as being unkempt or visually unappealing but fallen trees/dead trees make fantastic habitats for many insects which in turn are an essential food source for birds and other animals.

In February, the Regional Park Service and the Friends of the Pentlands work squad spent a full day improving Torduff Car Park at Bonaly. Work included cutting down trees, cutting back the hedge and clearing out the drainage. The result is a very open car park with clear bays which is more open and welcoming.

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There have also been two big projects taking place at Harlaw; the final stages of the installation of the Harlaw Hydro Scheme and the start of the hedge laying project. For further information on the hydro scheme, please read Martin Petty's article on page 9).

Area REPORT

Harlaw / Bonaly / Dreghorn / Castlelaw areas cont.



The hedge laying project relates to the 250 metre hedge that runs parallel to the access track from Harlaw Car Park to Harlaw House Visitor Centre. The hedge was planted approximately 12 years ago to stop dogs from entering the field which is used for growing crops. It was always intended to have the hedge laid; to improve nesting for birds, to expose the stunning view of the hills, to act as an example of a traditional countryside craft and have a dog proof hedge so that the fence could be removed. This winter we had approximately 110 metres of the hedge laid by hosting two hedge laying courses facilitated by Peter Holmes, of Rural Skills Training, who has 25 years experience in conservation and horticultural work. Both courses were fully booked with participants including Countryside Rangers, Friends of the Pentlands, Regional Park staff and members of the public including one

lady who came all the way from Holland to attend both courses!

The plan is to now host a further two courses in winter 2015 to lay the remaining hedge. Interpretation will be put up on site in spring explaining what hedge laying is and what it entails, so that the public can have a better understanding of the craft.

Work will begin shortly in the wildlife garden at Harlaw to complete the new herb area. The project is in conjunction with the Friends of the Pentland's garden squad who have over wintered herbs that will be transferred into the garden once spring is fully with us. Not only will the herbs attract a variety of butterflies and insects, they will also create a perfume of smells to compliment that of the flowering plants in the sensory bed.

Paula Newton
Natural Heritage Service

Area REPORT

Threipmuir / Hillend areas / Harperrig

Just before Christmas we had two heavily used sections of paths improved using money from the City of Edinburgh Council's cycling revenue project bank (money set aside by the City of Edinburgh Council to improve off-road cycling routes). Both paths are located at Threipmuir; one leading from Threipmuir Car Park, through Redford Wood (towards Red Moss at Bavelaw) and the other path leads to Threipmuir Reservoir, also known as the Dog Leg Path. Sections of these paths had been significantly eroded as they were waterlogged and therefore become muddy. The paths are now surfaced with appropriate drainage installed.

The City of Edinburgh Council's Flood Prevention Team have also carried out drainage and surfacing work on a section of path from Threipmuir Dam leading towards Black Springs.



The Ramblers Scotland group came out again and put in five sleeper bridges and drainage on the path between Listonshiels and West Rigg. This path along with the Borestone is part of the Scottish National Trail devised by outdoors writer and broadcaster Cameron McNeish.

If you intend to walk the Cauldstane Slap, Drovers Route in the West Lothian section of the Park, you will be pleased to hear the Little Vantage Car Park on the A70 has had the potholes filled.

Further along the A70, the bird hide on the shore of Harperrig Reservoir has also been repaired after the winter storms damaged the roof and door. It is a great place to sit with binoculars and watch the ducks and geese and maybe this summer a visiting osprey.

Victor Partridge
Natural Heritage Officer

Area REPORT

Flotterstone Glen area

Since November 2014 there has been the provision of specific dog fouling bins at two locations on the woodland walk leading from the car park at Flotterstone.

Pentland Hills Regional Park staff working directly with Midlothian Council Land Resource Manager discussed the issue of significant amounts of bagged dog fouling being left in the area in recent years and agreed that specific dog fouling bins would be a useful provision for visitors.

These bins are serviced by Midlothian Council and so far have met the needs of dog walkers, with a reduction of bagged foul being left on verges and in the car park. The bins provide a facility for dog walking visitors but also serves as a reminder that under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code visitors have a right to access this land

but in doing so, they have a legal responsibility to dispose of all their litter, waste and fouling responsibly. Where bin provision is limited or not available we ask all visitors to carry their waste to the nearest waste disposal or take their litter home.

Storms in January caused damage to trees and walls around the Glen Road area. Regional Park staff helped clear fallen branches and limbs and a large fallen tree which was blocking the road.

There have been incremental improvements to the visitor centre and its surrounds. Picnic tables have been relocated to the BBQ area as well as pruning of overhanging branches and vegetation in and around the Woodland Walk. The planning phase of a demonstration planter interpretation project

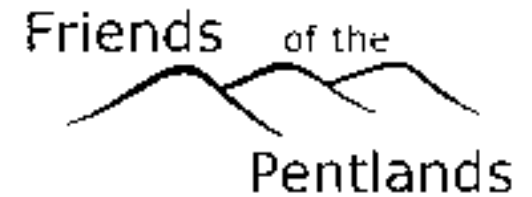
continues with the Drystane Wall Association and the Friends of the Pentlands, to provide living interpretation outside the visitor centre with a stone planter with plants on show that can be found in the Pentland Hills – this project will run through 2015 and the next phase is pending a successful funding application.

Volunteer groups visiting the Regional Park have included a group attending a rolling programme of activities with the EVOLS project, who are a supervised group of young

people looking to engage in practical maintenance activities. Their team has recently helped cut back encroaching gorse at Hillend Country Park. A group from Tiphereth that litter pick car parks at both Flotterstone and Harlaw continue their good work. There are also a number of corporate and volunteer projects which are 'shovel ready' and prepared for 2015.

Velda Weir
Natural Heritage Officer





Friends of the Pentlands is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Registered in Scotland No: SC035514

Conserving, protecting and enhancing

Our February talk saw Stan Cartmell of Balerno Ramblers giving us a fascinating 'Walk around Japan' talk which had a great turnout of members and friends.

We planted a hedge last year on the western side of Harperrig Reservoir, which has become well established – this commemorates the Centenary of World War I and has a commemorative plaque.

In early March the final way-markers and signs were put up on the new path from Little

Vantage to Selm Muir wood, which we have been working on for a number of months. This has involved installing boardwalks, a number of gates and yellow way-markers which makes the route very visible. The long-term plan is to link this path to a route being established by Kirknewton Community Council from Kirknewton Railway Station. At present you can walk from Kirknewton (via Leyden Road) to Selm Muir Wood, to Little Vantage and onto West Linton via the Cauldstane Slap on a way-marked path.

Have you enjoyed walking in the Pentlands in the past, but cannot manage it now? Do you know someone who fits this description?

If so, help is at hand ... On the 28 and 29 May we will be offering free use of mobility scooters from Threipmuir Car Park where you can access the Robin Aitken bird hide at Bavelaw Marsh, Red Moss boardwalk and to Harlaw Reservoir and back. For more information please contact Esmee Yuille on email: yuilles@talktalk.net

For further information about the Friends of the Pentlands, please visit our website: www.pentlandfriends.org.uk

To find out more about volunteering with us, please contact our Volunteer Organiser Phil Rowsby on email: prowsby@gmail.com.

'It's good for Hills to have Friends'

Booking and drop in events

For further information on all our events please telephone 0131 529 2401 or email: pentlandhills@edinburgh.gov.uk. Our 2015 events leaflet 'Enjoy the Pentland Hills Regional Park' is available in the visitor centres and on our website www.pentlandhills.org.

NEXT EVENT

Take part in our 2015 events programme; biodiversity surveys, family events, guided walks and practical conservation. Booking is required, unless stated.

Pondlife @ Harlaw
Tuesday 14 April
1.30 – 3.30pm

Come along to Harlaw Wildlife Garden and discover what creatures lurk beneath the water of the wildlife pond. Drop in session, no booking required.

ACCESS EVENT

Get Hooked
Sunday 14 June
11am – 3pm

Join us for a fun filled day at Harlaw Reservoir, learning about what is involved in fishing and how you can play your part. Drop in session, no booking required.

PENTLAND WALKING FESTIVAL

Teddy Bear Adventures
Thursday 16 July
10.30am – 12 noon

From Carlins to Carving
Thursday 16 July
10am – 2.30pm

Teddy Bear Adventures
Thursday 17 July
10.30am – 12 noon

Northern History
Friday 17 July
10am – 3.45pm

The Ridge
Saturday 18 July
10am – 4pm

WEST LOTHIAN WALKING FESTIVAL

The Wild West
Friday 25 September
10am – 2pm

A walk along by the largest reservoir in the Regional Park, Harperrig Reservoir and up to the second highest point in West Lothian, West Cairn.

EVENTS

Practical Conservation
Woodland Restoration
Sunday 27 September
1 – 3pm

Come along and carry out practical conservation work; help tidy up Bonaly Country Park after the busy summer season.

ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH

Pentlands Archaeology
Thursday 29 October
10am – 2pm

Discover the evidence left behind and the stories they tell of life in the Pentlands.

BIODIVERSITY SURVEYS

Take part in our biodiversity surveys from April – August.

Breeding Bird Survey
Tuesday 7 April
6.30 – 8.30am

BIODIVERSITY SURVEYS

Green Hairstreak Survey
Monday 27 April
1.30 – 3.30pm

Breeding Bird Survey
Monday 6 May
6.30 – 8.30am

Green Hairstreak Survey
Monday 11 May
1.30 – 3.30pm

Breeding Bird Survey
Monday 1 June
6.30 – 8.30am

Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary Survey
Tuesday 16 June
1.30 – 3.30pm

Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary Survey
Monday 29 June
1.30 – 3.30pm

Wildflower Meadow Survey
Monday 20 July
1.30 – 3.30pm

Wildflower Meadow Survey
Monday 3 August
1.30 – 3.30pm

No prior experience necessary.
Booking required.



You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats if you ask us. Please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service (ITS) on 0131 242 8181 and quote reference number 14-1518. The ITS can also give information on community language translations. You can get more copies of this document by calling 0131 529 2401.

We hope that you have enjoyed the articles in this publication. If you encounter any difficulties or disappointment, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Park staff, or ask them for a copy of the City of Edinburgh Council's 'Make Contact' form (for complaints and suggestions).

After you have gone through the Council's complaints process, if you are still not happy, you have the right to take your complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 23 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7HX. Telephone 0870 011 5378. Generally, if you want to do this, you must contact the Ombudsman within one year.

The Pentland Beacon is produced by the Pentland Hills Regional Park Service and designed and printed by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Letters or articles for inclusion can be sent to Paula Newton at:

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The Service is supported by the City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian Council, West Lothian Council and Scottish Water.



pentland hills
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Designed by the City of Edinburgh Council. Corporate Governance. 14.221/SFC/SGe/April 2015.