

DRUMOIG WILDLIFE FORUM – April 2018 UPDATE

Important Notice of closure of Morton Lochs car park for forestry work

A car park and hides at Morton Lochs, near Tayport in Fife, will be closed for a week from Monday 23 April.

Forestry works at Morton Lochs will mean that visitors won't be able to use the car park and the bird hides there. The access road will still be open for residents and businesses, although there may be some delays.

Tree felling work is being carried out to make safe an area of trees which were damaged in past storms. Tom Cunningham, SNH's reserve manager explained: "A few years ago we took the decision to close the Wild Walk around the south loch and forest, because of trees that had blown over during gales and high winds. We're carrying out this important work to make sure that visitors can enjoy the lochs and the woodlands safely. "I'd like to thank people in advance for their patience. You can still use the Forestry Commission car park at Kinshaldy or use paths to access the reserve from Tayport. For more information please check out our website at <http://www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/tentsmuir/visiting/>."

Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve boasts constantly moving sand at the edge of the sea to the colourful dune heathland. Seals haul themselves out of the water to watch the world go by, while hungry birds fill up on the rich mix of food hidden in the mudflats.

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RSPB Big Garden Watch 2018

The results have been issued and the RSPB have reported that 420,489 people across the UK took part in the above and recorded 6,764,475 birds. The top bird recorded was the House Sparrow (see below).



Attached is a sheet showing the top ten sightings in Scotland

Results also showed that:

- It was a good year for **Greenfinches** - sightings were 5% up which was good news as their numbers had decreased by 60% since Birdwatch started in 1979. It is thought the rise is due to good conditions in their breeding season.
- **Siskins** are on the rise are now number 24 in the table and there were also more sightings of **Bramblings** both of which are winter visitors.
- **Goldfinches** - rose by 11%.
- On the down side **Blackbird and Robin** numbers had dropped – Blackbirds were down by 18% and Robins by 12%. This may have been because the mild winter meant more food was available in the countryside, so they didn't need to rely on garden food. Although they may not have had such a good breeding season.

Bird Boxes



Eight more bird boxes have been put up around Drumoig Golf Course and in the SSSI area. These are Schwegler wood-crete nest boxes and are extremely durable and well suited to all weather conditions. They are manufactured from a wood-concrete material made up of 75% wood and various additives to compensate for climatic changes. This process not only provides insulation against temperature fluctuations but allows air to pass through the walls and prevents the formation of condensation which often occurs in nest boxes made of plastic, stone or entirely of concrete. Schwegler guarantee their wood-crete habitats to last for at least 20 - 25 years.

Red Squirrels

Many thanks to all the residents that have sent me their Red Squirrel sightings and photos and videos. Please keep them coming.

I have been in contact with the Conservation Officer from Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels, who is very pleased to hear about our sightings. I asked if there was anything we could do to support the red squirrels and their recommendations are shown below.

1. The single most useful thing we can do to help them is remove any grey squirrels in the area. They request that anyone that sees grey squirrels should report them via www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk. The key information that is required is the date, location (they have an interactive map), information about the location and type of habitat. You can also record your Red Squirrels sightings here as well.
2. Providing a squirrel feeder is good, but this is only supplementary food and it is not advisable to encourage squirrels to become dependent on it (i.e. don't put out too much food).
3. Feeders should be cleaned regularly in order not to facilitate the spread of diseases. They say Virkon S which is a good disinfectant that kills viruses, and they recommend doing this as often as possible preferably – weekly, fortnightly or monthly. Another one is Ark-Klens.

Green Shores – Tay & Eden Estuaries Saltmarsh Restoration

Thanks to Henry Orr, Craigie Hill for highlighting the following local project.

'Green Shores' is an innovative applied research project, based at the School of Biology, University of St Andrews and is unique to Scotland, and aims to restore fringe saltmarsh habitat to key sections of shoreline in three of Scotland's most economically and ecologically important estuaries: The Eden and Tay Estuaries and the Dornoch Firth.

It is funded by the St Andrews Links Trust, the Ministry of Defence, Fife Council, the Royal Dornoch Golf Club and Leader. Kindly supported by Fife Coast & Countryside Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

The project team are currently looking for volunteers to help with digging and planting – so if you can spare some time and don't mind getting muddy here are the dates and locations.

19-22 April: Tay Estuary, East Common shoreline, Tayport

3-6 May: Eden Estuary, south shore

16-19 May: Eden Estuary, north shore

If you can help please contact Dr Clare Maynard for more details at cem3@st-andrews.ac.uk or visit <https://synergy.st-andrews.ac.uk/serq/projects/greenshores/>