



C.V.C.W.T.

Spring 2011

Woodland habitats from "source to sea"

Issue 10

Hello and Welcome to our latest newsletter! It's been another busy year for us and the following articles are the highlights.

Upper Cree Project

We are now at the end of the second year of planting in our 3 year project in the Upper Cree, which aims to produce a riparian corridor along the length of the River Cree, north from Dalnaw, up to Loch Moan. This corridor will also extend along 3 of the main tributary burns of the Cree, the Clachrie, Fardin and Cairnfore burns, to their sources in the hills. Most of this area was formerly extensively afforested and still contains conifer plantations, but large areas of the riparian zone have been clear-felled. The wildlife corridor will consist of a mosaic of habitats including mixed native broad-leaved woodland. A hundred and twenty hectares within the 670 hectare site are being planted with local provenance trees. This will not only create a valuable riparian corridor, but also contribute to the health of the watercourse, providing shade and cover and also detritus in the form of rotting leaves. This in turn will provide food for invertebrates which will provide food for other aquatic life such as salmonids. Conifer regeneration is also being removed from the riversides and it is hoped that the overall reduction in conifers which had led to acidification of the watercourse, coupled with appropriate riparian habitat management, will improve conditions for the brown trout and salmon found in these waters.



*CVCWT volunteers planting broadleaves,
Upper Cree*

Contractors are carrying out the bulk of this work but some of the smaller, easier to access areas have been ear-marked for planting with the CVCWT volunteer group. We are particularly keen to plant some willow slips, cut from existing specimens. Willows were one of the earliest arrivals after the last ice-age and hence there has been a very long time for invertebrates to adapt to using them. They can therefore support well over 250 species of insects which is approaching the number associated with our most valuable tree species, the oak. The willows will be planted in suitable habitat near the stream-sides, particularly where water voles (an LBAP species) have been found, where they will provide an important source of winter fodder.

On some of the grassy banks where we were planting in December, several less welcome field voles were seen, disturbed from the long grass. These can be quite destructive to newly planted trees, gnawing at the bark and often causing death by ring-barking. To manage against this the trees are planted by first 'screefing' a patch of ground by removing a turf. This creates a piece of bare ground where the voles feel less secure and are more open to predators such as owls. The trees are planted in these patches and fitted either with a vole guard or with a tree guard, pressed into the ground to prevent access by the voles.

Apart from the willows and where the soil and conditions are suitable, a good range of native broad-leaved species are being planted including downy birch, rowan, alder, ash, hazel, hawthorn, sessile oak and aspen. More species are being grown in our tree nursery to plant later on.

Wood of Cree (Barclye) to Knockman Extension Path

The extension path is now open. Our partners, RSPB, have created three trails which start from the new car park 1.25km (0.75 miles) south of the Wood of Cree car park. Two of the trails are contained within Barclye. The third, red marked trail takes you up through Barclye and enters Knockman Wood through the deer dyke. After a brief walk through the edge of a young



Southerly view coming back down extension path at Knockman

conifer crop, the path emerges into the light and climbs up to a pile of stones which marks the highest point in Knockman Wood at 221m (725 feet). This affords spectacular panoramic views of the surrounding hills with Newton Stewart below and Wigtown Bay beyond this. As the path weaves its way down the hill into the oakwoods, individual tree enclosures can be seen, built by FCS volunteers. These will protect oaks, planted to replace dying trees and hawthorns, from the high level of browsing from fallow deer. The path joins with the main Knockman Wood circular path, on to the Knockman Wood car park, returning to the Barclye car park via the road - a round trip of approximately 5.5 miles (9km).

One of the specialist bird species of these open oakwoods is the redstart, a striking summer visitor which breeds here. Nest boxes specially designed to attract redstarts are being put up by CVCWT volunteers. The boxes have a slotted entrance hole to emulate a split in a hollow tree stump. Redstarts in different areas appear to have a preference for certain types of nest box. In other parts of the country, a tunnel-shaped box which is strapped to the underside of a branch to act as a hollow branch has been successful.

Tree Nursery

During the Spring and Summer months, CVCWT volunteers were kept very busy building and fitting out a large polytunnel at our new nursery site.

Two raised beds have also been constructed with the help of young people from The Aberlour Child-care Trust in Stranraer; and paths have been constructed to allow easy access.

Local tree seed has been collected by community groups. Hazel and oak seed are being grown by members of the ARC in Newton Stewart.

Penninghame Primary School children have been participating in CVCWT's pilot "Seed to Tree" project by collecting acorns, planting them at the nursery and eventually planting them out in the Cree Valley woods.

There is included in the project a classroom session where the children learn a little about the importance of the oak tree as an eco-system for birds, butterflies and mammals. CVCWT is keen to involve other local schools and community groups in the nursery project, so if you think this would be of interest to your group please get in touch.



CVCWT Local Provenance Tree Nursery

Habitats

One of the ways in which CVCWT can make a difference to bird populations is by the provision of nest boxes. The RSPB have proven that, in suitable habitats where there is plenty of food for the birds, the addition of nest boxes can greatly increase the numbers of breeding pairs of Pied Flycatchers. It is often the case within woodlands that although there may seem to be ample suitable breeding habitat, there are a lack of holes in trees in which the birds can nest. This is often due to past management which may have cut down most of the trees in one area at the same time, resulting in a multitude of straight, tall poles. These hold relatively few nesting places compared with older more gnarled trees.



Similarly in CVCWT's management area in the Upper Cree, there are large areas of suitable habitat for Barn Owls crawling with their favourite prey, the field vole. However there are not many suitable buildings or large trees to nest in. The relative abundance of voles may be more of an issue effecting the numbers of breeding pairs of Kestrels. However the provision of nest boxes will help to ensure that in good vole years, Kestrels can find suitable and secure nesting sites.



Top photo is a Kestrel box and the bottom photo is a Barn Owl box.

The provision of nest boxes will therefore ensure that CVCWT areas being managed for wildlife are utilised to their full extent by desirable and often endangered bird species. These specialist bird boxes have been built by community volunteers, including young people from the Aberlour Childcare Trust.

Other News

Look out for CVCWT's new leaflet, which is now in general circulation in visitor centres, Newton Stewart Library, community centres and also available from the Daltamie office. This has been produced with the artistic assistance of some of our volunteers, namely Iona White and Gavin Chambers. Our leaflet contains a map showing the location of all the woodlands currently under CVCWT's management.

Other woodland management includes broadleaf planting at the Water of Trool and Knockman Wood, memorial/celebration tree planting at Buchan and Caldons, path maintenance at Doonhill, Blairmount, Duncree, Camer and Knockman Woods, bracken spraying at Knockman and Buchan Woods, planting and weeding at the Montane Scrub Demonstration Garden, Stroans and deer-fence repairs at Knockman.



Please pass this newsletter on to a friend when you have finished with it.

Volunteer Events

Volunteer events over the last year have included building a polytunnel, installing staging and constructing external raised beds and bedding area; planting, strimming, collecting seed, weeding of conifer seedlings, monitoring and repairing fences, making specialist bird boxes, putting up & monitoring of bat and bird boxes and cleaning of boxes and much, much more!



Volunteers planting on the Merrick Hill

Why not give volunteering a try!

All events are on a Wednesday 10am-3pm, unless stated otherwise and there is no obligation to attend every week—just come when you feel like some fresh air and outdoor exercise.

Walks in 2011

Fri 6th May 2-5pm: Wood of Cree to Newton Stewart via Knockman Wood (Part of the Walking Festival. Meet at Dashwood Square. Refer to Walking Festival leaflet/website for more details.

Fri 20th May 2-4pm: Bluebells & Birds at Camer. Meet at High Camer picnic site (NX366732).

Fri 10th June 2-4pm: Flowers of Glentroll Oakwoods. Meet at Bruce's Stone car park (NX415804).

Fri 1st July 2-4pm: Butterflies, Dragonflies & Birds, Knockman Wood. Meet at Knockman Wood car park (NX410679).

Fri 5th Aug 2-4pm: Waterside Wildlife, Caldons. Meet at Caldons car park (NX397792).

Fri 2nd Sept 2-4pm: Archaeology of Knockman Wood. Meet at Knockman Wood car park (NX410679).

Fri 7th Oct 2-4pm: Lichens & Fungi at Caldons Wood. Meet at Caldons car park (NX397792).

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If there are any issues you wish to raise, or would simply like to know more about what we do, please contact either Pete or Linda at C.V.C.W.T. Daltamie, Palnure, Newton Stewart, DG8 7BE

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