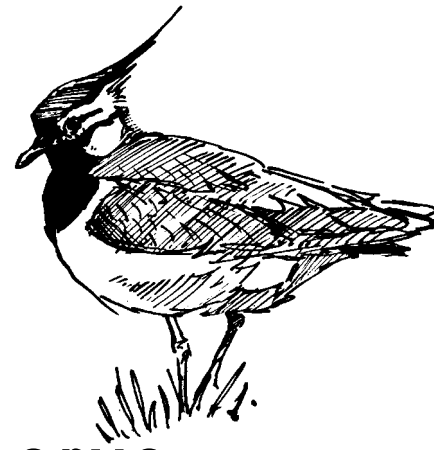




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Spring 2012

Loch of Kinnordy Nature Reserve Newsletter

Reserve News

There are three mini-projects underway at Kinnordy at the moment, thanks to some Angus Environmental Trust Funding we were granted. Hopefully all three will be complete before the breeding season begins. Firstly, a new fence line is being erected at the west end of the reserve. This new fence line is for an enclosure for a herd of 4 Konik ponies that we are expecting at Kinnordy by the end of March. Basically the Konik ponies are our new lawn mowers, along with the existing mowers we have on-site – highland cattle. We are bringing the Koniks on-site to graze the fen and marsh on the middlemarsh, which is too wet for the highland cattle who favour the dry, rich grassland. The Konik ponies, which were due at the beginning of March have been slightly delayed and so are now expected to be with us by the end of March. More information about the Koniks will be available nearer the time, but if you can't wait till then, please feel free to get in touch with the warden. More recently a contract (with AMW) to clear up some more willow scrub (approx. 6ha) at the North side of the reserve has started. As part of the man plan willow clearance has been a major priority for 2011-12. You may have already seen some smoke coming from the north end of the reserve from the hides. The contract is for 3 weeks, and will be finished by the end of March.

Then it is the return of the Truxor. After its successful trial in December we have been eager to get the Truxor back to chop up the bog-bean islands in front of Gullery, as well as to clear up some of the encroaching vegetation that is starting to eat up some open water outside Gullery. Please bear in mind that the Truxor may cause a small disturbance to the

black-headed gulls that have already started to take up resident on the bogbean islands. Fortunately, the Truxor is only available to us for 7 days and will be gone before the end of March.

Wildlife Highlights

Otter sightings are becoming more regular here at Kinnordy. Already this year there have already been a few sightings of otters.



Mike Andrews, Jan 2012

A male smew over-wintered at Kinnordy. He appeared, with a female in tow to start with, around mid-December. The female quickly left within a week but the male managed to stick in and around the reserve until the end of February. The last sighting was made on 21st Feb.

Seeing him for this amount of time was really great; he always showed up really well from both Gullery hide and East hide. Even the cold weather couldn't keep him away for too long – when the loch finally froze over slightly mid-Dec, he seemed to disappear for at least a week, but once the loch unfroze (which didn't take long during the very mild winter we had this year) he was back again posing in-front of the hides.



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This winter also saw a new over-wintering flock for Kinnordy. There was a regular group of up to 15 white fronted geese – of which one was a Greenland white fronted goose – which regularly used Kinnordy and the adjacent fields. More recently their numbers have dropped, but a small number have been seen in and around the site at the end of Feb - two white fronts were found hiding in some vegetation directly outside East hide and they were so well camouflaged that they could have been easily over-looked.

A green winged teal has been in and around the reserve since 22nd Feb. At first he liked spending time on the bog-bean islands in front of Gullery hide, but since then he has become harder to find; usually hiding and blending in well in the far N.East corner of the loch.



Green-winged teal (with common teal in front),
Richard Blackburn, Feb 2012

The end of Feb (29th) saw the first sighting of a bittern since Nov last year. He showed up really well in the reeds directly opposite Gullery at around 4pm. A second sighting, in the same place at the same time less than a week later, on the 5th March.

What to look out for in Spring

On the clear, crisp, brighter days that are likely to come our way keep your eyes open for possible hen harrier sightings, searching over the marsh for lunch - first sighting in 2012 was 5th March. Water rail and wagtails are also a possibility. Keep your eyes peeled for the bittern and you might be lucky enough to spot it too. On the Loch itself, you can still see large

groups of teal, mallard, and greylag geese; as well as goldeneye, tufted duck, gadwall, goosander, wigeon, shoveler and mute swans, until breeding season when some of the birds will have to migrate.

Whooper swan numbers have started to grow as they feed up before soon embarking on their flight back to Iceland for the breeding season. You may even notice other birds in pairs or beginning to pair up already. Some mute swans and coot have even been showing some territorial behaviour lately. Remember breeding season is just around the corner so please help by keeping disturbance in hides and on paths to a minimum.

On the paths along the woodland you can regularly see and hear the calls of blue tits, bullfinches, reed bunting and long-tailed tits. Soon warblers will be returning from Africa. Perhaps you may even be lucky enough to spot a red squirrel, or two, in the trees.

Look out for events poster coming soon in the hides. We have been organising and planning special events, such as guided walks and moth trapping, and are looking forward to seeing you there.

Please record all sightings in the book supplied in Gullery hide, they are all kept and are very useful.

If you would like to ask about joining the RSPB; would like some information about birdwatching at Loch of Kinnordy; or have any questions about the work of the RSPB in general, please feel free to ask any of our volunteers, who can usually be found daily on site, and they will be more than happy to help you.

For further information, please contact:

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