



The Friends of Duchess Wood

Members' Newsletter No. 19 (September 2016)

AGM of the FODW : Please note the date !

Wednesday 26th. October 2016, 7.30 p.m.

The FODW Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30 pm on **Wednesday 26th October** in the **Sports Centre of Lomond School**, located in Rhu Road Higher. There is ample parking space there. Papers for the formal part of the session will be sent to members in advance.

The formal session will be followed by a talk by **Paula Baker** who is the **Site Manager of RSPB Loch Lomond**. This Wetlands, Woodlands and Wildlife Reserve was purchased by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in 2012. Paula's illustrated talk will describe the fantastic wildlife on the site, current work and the RSPB's plans for the future.

Refreshments. Everyone welcome. Please bring friends and family.

Reminder : Any motions from paid-up members for the AGM should be sent to the Secretary, FODW, 40 West Montrose Street, Helensburgh, G84 9PF, proposed and seconded by registered members, by 28th September 2016.

PAULA BAKER

Paula has worked for the RSPB for 11 years. A Geography graduate of Leicester University, she has had experience in Wales and Yorkshire before settling in Scotland. She has worked at Lochwinnoch before her post as Site Manager for the Loch Lomond reserve.

She is a wildlife enthusiast with special interest in moths. She is also a drummer and plays for several bands.



PONDS PROGRESS

The new ponds are settling down. A variety of insects and some young froglets have been observed, and yellow flag irises and marsh marigolds have been transplanted to them from other parts of the Wood by FODW work parties. Further varied plantings are currently in the course of being planned, partly supported by grants.

As a result of surveys by members, we have confirmed the presence of common lizards in the Wood, and a nest of field voles was discovered close to one of the ponds

Two new members of the FODW committee

We welcome Paul Blackburn and Pete Minting as new trustees on the FODW committee.

Members are reminded that committee members are reappointed each year at the AGM.

The effectiveness of FODW depends on committed volunteers on the committee and we are grateful for their work.

A full list of current trustees is at the bottom of page 2 below.

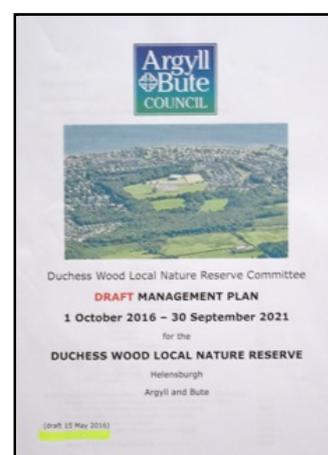
Five-year Management Plan for the Wood

FODW has completed what we hope will be the final draft of the revised Management Plan 2016-21 for the Wood. It will now go through Argyll and Bute Council procedures. If any member is interested in seeing this, please ask.

We have continued to work with a Council sub-committee established to take forward funding applications. It is hoped to progress the trial thinning of sycamore and ash in the lower part of the Wood between Rhu Road Higher and the garages in the autumn. A&BC have promised to deal with the trees overhanging the garages, when the leaves are off the trees.



The Council's war against the four clumps of Japanese knotweed in Duchess Wood has made progress, but residual patches are appearing. (See photo left.) We hope that they will be dealt with before they spread.



CAMERA TRAP

A 'camera trap' to help photograph wildlife in the Wood has been purchased and is ready to set up. It is hoped that this will help us identify some of the more secretive animals and birds in the Wood.



FODW Information Weekend

This was held on Saturday/Sunday 16/17 April and was a success. Information desks were set up at two of the four entry points to the Wood (car park and garages areas) – see photo left. Almost 500 people (of whom about 100 were children) were recorded between 08.00 and 17.00 and if those arriving earlier or later or by other entry points are estimated, the figures must have been greater. There were cyclists, dog walkers, joggers and horse riders in addition to walkers and family outings.

Orienteering markers

Following consultation with FODW, Lomond School has recently fitted small red and white orienteering markers around the Wood.

Buglife event

Buglife is the conservation charity for invertebrates. Following its successful insect tours in Duchess Wood last year, Buglife returned in April this year as a contribution to the John Muir week. Its Scottish officer, Suzanne Burgess, put emphasis on pollinating insects this time and showed a range of these, including bees. The photo, right, shows her holding a burrowing bee in the Wood to the west of the upper Rugby pitch and she showed her audience the holes where these bees burrow. She later emailed FODW that this was the first recorded instance of such bees in this area.



Community liaison and representation.

FODW has continued with its foundation tasks of engaging with and representing the local community regarding Duchess Wood. That includes our annual consultations with the Police and Fire Services. The photo left shows Inspector Coleen Wylie discussing with FODW secretary, Alastair Macbeth, potential problems and the use of periodic bicycle-mounted police patrols.

New FODW leaflets.

FODW has created two new leaflets, the first introducing FODW and inviting membership and the second suggesting ten top things to see in the Wood. Copies of these will be made available at the FODW annual general meeting. The Flower Walk leaflet has been slightly altered and reprinted.

Pokémon Go We understand that numerous 'Pokémon Go' characters are to be found in the Wood. This explains numbers of younger people visiting the Wood, armed with mobile phones. If any member is unaware of this phenomenon, please consult any available child/grandchild. And moving further into the digital age, Quick Response (QR) code stickers have been placed at the entry points to the Wood to enable visitors to link directly to the FODW website using their mobile phone/tablet. In both these cases, of course, if they can get a mobile phone signal.

WORK PARTIES

Over the summer there have been regular monthly FODW work parties which have dealt with litter, overhanging branches, blocked culverts and the path scouring which happens when a culvert is blocked, bench and fencing repairs, rhododendron and sycamore removal, and weeding around the tree plantings. There has been a first crop (at least 20!) of very tasty cherries and of one of the Scottish traditional apples on the pony field. Thanks to a donation from the Helensburgh and Gareloch Horticultural society, we were able to plant the car park "island" with spring flowering primulas and bulbs. The pony field has been strimmed by a combination of Community Payback and FODW efforts and a further cut of the whole field is planned shortly to help encourage the wild flowers in the area next year.

YOUR VIEWS

The FODW email address is fodwg84@gmail.com. The website shows the contact email as enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk, and this forwards emails to the fodwg84 address.

Website. www.duchesswood.org.uk

FODW is a voluntary, non-political local community group and a registered charity. It works co-operatively with other groups such as the Lower Clyde Greenspace, Community Payback, the Access Trust, the Green Belt Group, and a range of other bodies especially, of course, the Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee which is responsible for the Wood. We are grateful to them for the contributions they have made to make the Wood so special.

Current FODW Trustees are Stewart Campbell (Chairman), Alastair Macbeth (Secretary), Bill Hassall (Treasurer), Morag Young, Rachel Bailey, Kevin Johnson, David Lewin, Richard Horrell, Paul Blackburn, Pete Minting.