

The BIG project

Biodiversity in Glasgow

Spring Newsletter 2008



Hogganfield Park – Glasgow City Council

Welcome to the BIG Newsletter for Spring 2008 in which we are able to show you some early results from last year’s survey. Marlies Maclean, one of our BIG volunteers, will give us an insight into her feelings for her site – Red Road Nature Park: a designated City Council Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Sheila Russell continues with our Spotlight Series on different sites; this issue focusing on Early Braes. Paul Kirkland, the Director of Butterfly Conservation Scotland, tells us about Garden Moths Count and Paul Stancliffe, BTO Promotions Officer, gives a quick introduction to Garden Birdwatch.

Thoughts from Liz Humphreys, BIG Project Manager...

Thanks to all volunteers who took part in the BIG project in 2007. We had a great response despite the pretty wet and cold conditions of last summer. All the data has now been input and we have been able to summarise all the records for the first year of the project. It was very exciting to find out that 91 species of birds and 16 species

of butterflies had been recorded in the green spaces of Glasgow last summer.

Due to high demand, we decided to hold another training day for birds in 2008. We had a great day at Pollok Park with 26 people attending. Another training day for butterflies is scheduled at the end of April and is already fully booked up. We are still actively recruiting butterfly surveyors, so if you know of anybody who would like to get involved, then please ask them to get in touch, as we can provide them with training packs.

We hope that you continue to be involved with the BIG project. The bird surveys will start in mid-April so you should have your forms by now. The butterfly survey will start in mid-May so you can expect to receive your forms early next month. Fingers crossed for better weather and happy surveying!

BIG FACTS

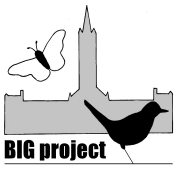
The three most commonly sighted bird species were the Blackbird, Robin and Great Tit. Interesting records included Kingfisher and Reed Bunting.

The most commonly seen butterfly species were Meadow Brown and Small White (24 sites each). Interesting records included Grayling, Comma and Elephant Hawkmoth. Common Blue was only seen at two sites.

British Trust for Ornithology Charity No 216652 (England and Wales) No SC039193 (Scotland) Company Limited by Guarantee No 357284 (England and Wales) Registered Office The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

Butterfly Conservation, Company Limited by Guarantee, registered in England (2206468). Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP. Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268)





The BIG project

Biodiversity in Glasgow

Red Road Nature Park



Marlies Maclean

Marlies Maclean, BIG volunteer, is surprised by the biodiversity of her site...

When I first heard that the Red Road Nature Park was to be my allotted BIG survey area, it sounded, and looked on the map, such an unlikely place that I double checked the map reference. Having been assured that it was correct, my misgivings were not entirely assuaged when we went to do our initial habitat survey. Yes, there were numerous small native trees, mostly birch, willow, and rowan, but there was litter everywhere, a number of burnt trees, and much of the heather and a fairly large swathe of grass had likewise been burnt. There were also extensive patches of the ever-increasing Japanese Knotweed. However, we did see two Small Tortoiseshells and one Peacock butterfly, a heartening sight, and there was a natural, rubbish-edged pond.

We returned the following morning to do the first bird survey and, to my amazement and joy, recorded not just the more expected woodland birds such as Blackbird, Robin, and Wren, but also four Willow Warblers, one Siskin, four Mallards, one Reed Bunting, and even a

Meadow Pipit flying over. A pair of Carrion Crows was nesting just outside my precise area and they, plus the Magpies which we encountered on each visit, probably answered for the lack of obvious nesting success. To this interesting and unexpected list, I was later able to add long tailed Tits, a Goldfinch, and, to my delight, two Whitethroats.

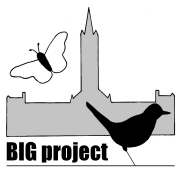
When it came to the butterfly survey, which I undertook with some trepidation, as I know very few species, I became more and more astonished with every visit at the wealth and number of wild flowers, including the most luscious orchids I have ever seen. As for butterflies, we counted 37 Orange Tip eggs, though we missed the butterflies themselves. The common (to me) ones, such as Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, and the various whites, were in short supply. In contrast, if my identification is correct, there were five Meadow Browns, fifteen Ringlets, one Small Copper, and numerous Small Heaths. To this we added at least two dragonflies, several grasshoppers, one Elephant Hawk-moth caterpillar, and one well-nibbled large yellowish toadstool.

If even one quarter of the residents in the seven 32-storey flats could be persuaded to give a hand, this tiny jewel of a reserve could be made (and kept) rubbish free in a few hours.



Marlies Maclean





The BIG project

Biodiversity in Glasgow

Spotlight on Early Braes



Glasgow City Council

Sheila Russell, Ecologist at Glasgow City Council, tells us about Early Braes

Wetlands have been under pressure for a long time as areas have been drained for agricultural land. Within cities there has also been pressure on wetlands, this time mainly for housing, retail and industrial development. Glasgow City Council Conservation Team in Land and Environmental Services, has been working to create and enhance wetland to help mitigate some of this loss.

The Early Braes Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) lies in the east of the City and the Tollcross Burn runs through the SINC. Prior to 1993, the site was mainly amenity grassland. Plantation woodland of native broadleaved trees and areas of grassland were

established giving a good habitat mix of woodland, wildflower meadows, amenity grass and the watercourse. Wetland, however, was limited.

The aim of Early Braes project was to create wetland habitat, primarily to protect and enhance the existing water vole population and to enhance the biodiversity value of the site through habitat management.

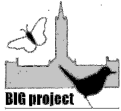
Four ponds, designed to provide a mixture of permanent and semi-permanent water bodies, were created near the Tollcross Burn. Drawdown zones were created and the shapes were designed to maximise the pond edge. The ponds were planted up with native species of aquatic vegetation, much from other sites in the City so introducing invertebrates to the newly created ponds. The surrounding grassland was seeded with a wildflower mix and appropriate cutting regimes established.

Common Frog now spawns in the wetland, Mallard have been seen using the ponds and it is hoped other species such as Reed Bunting, a Glasgow Local Biodiversity Action Plan species will be attracted to the site. The habitat creation including the wetland and wildflower meadow was also to attract insects such as damselflies, dragonflies and butterflies. Common Darter has been recorded for the first time and many butterflies can be seen in summer.

Directions to Early Braes

Early Braes lies to the north of Baillieston Road and to the west of Barrachnie Road. The best place to park is in a small road to an industrial estate - this road runs between the main section of the park to the east and a smaller but interesting section to the west. Access to the eastern section is from the corner of the small road and Baillieston Road. Access to the western section is through (or over if locked to prevent dumping) a gate on Baillieston Road close to the small road. The junction of the access road to the industrial estate and Baillieston Road is at NS 662 640.





The BIG project

Biodiversity in Glasgow

If you enjoyed the BIG project there are other great projects to get involved in. Gardens are important natural reserves for both birds and butterflies. Below we introduce two garden surveys.

Garden Bird Watch



Paul Stancliffe, BTO Promotions Officer, tells us how we can become citizen scientists...

Most of us have access to a garden. It might be huge and in a rural setting, or it could be small and in the middle of a city, but the one thing all gardens, big and small, have in common is that they will be used by birds. If you feed and watch them, then you are already a garden birdwatcher. By taking one step further you could also become a scientist, or more appropriately a citizen scientist, by joining the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch survey.

You can take part over breakfast, or whilst having a mid-morning cup of tea. You can count the birds for as little as one hour per week, or every day if you like. All we ask is that you are consistent in your approach from one week to the next. By doing this you will join over 16,000 Garden BirdWatchers, adding to our knowledge of how, why and when birds use our gardens and, more importantly, just how well they are doing.

So, join the biggest survey of its kind in the world and make your garden count. For more information on the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch survey, visit www.bto.org/gbw or telephone 01786 466560 or write to BTO Scotland, SBES, Cottrell Building, University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA.

Garden Moths Count



Paul Kirkland, Director of Butterfly Conservation Scotland, explains how to get involved in a new project...

From 21st June to 6th July you and your family can take part in Garden Moths Count, a nationwide survey of an overlooked but vital part of our garden biodiversity. There are more than 2,500 species of moths in Britain and your back garden could easily have a hundred species. Moths can be just as colourful as butterflies and, with their caterpillars, play essential roles in the garden ecosystem, as pollinators and as food for toads, hedgehogs, bats and birds.

Garden Moths Count is an online survey aimed at complete beginners to raise awareness and appreciation of moths. It focuses on twenty beautiful and easily identified species found in gardens. Anyone can take part, adults or children, and no specialist equipment is required. Fun ways for children to attract moths are described, and there is an online gallery for identification.

Garden Moths Count is part of the Moths Count project, led by Butterfly Conservation, which aims to improve knowledge and conservation of moths in the UK. For more information about moths and the project, including free moth events you can attend, see www.mothscount.org

