

# TIDELINES

Newsletter of the Solway Firth Partnership • Issue 32 • Winter/Spring 2009/10

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# Chairman's Column



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Gordon Mann, OBE  
SFP Chairman

The past few months have been particularly interesting for the Partnership with key milestones in development of both the UK Marine & Coastal Access Bill and the Scottish Marine Bill. We have done everything we possibly can to ensure that the needs of the local area are adequately taken into account and that we get a well integrated system of marine planning and management which properly addresses the challenges presented by our unique cross border situation. We are very pleased that our views have been heard by both the UK Government and the Scottish Parliament and are confident that outcomes have been achieved which support holistic management of the

Solway Firth as a whole.

Thank you to everyone who has supported these efforts including our board of trustees, members, partners and colleagues. Thanks are also due to many of our local MPs and MSPs, particularly Russell Brown MP, Eric Martlew MP, David Mundell MP and Elaine Murray MSP. With the framework of the Marine Bills now largely in place we look forward to enactment during the coming months and to the ongoing process of supporting integration between interests around the Firth which is our primary function.

Meanwhile, other areas of work have not been neglected and the Partnership was delighted to host a Solway Firth European Marine Site seminar in Carlisle in September. Excellent presentations from Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural England, Dumfries & Galloway Council, Tullie House Museum, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty set the scene for debate which covered the collection and management of biological data, raising awareness and understanding of the site designations, considering principal impacts on key habitats and species and, critically, identifying actions which can support good management of the area. Several potential projects are being explored as a direct result of this event and we look forward to bringing you more news on progress in future editions of Tidelines.

We have also been busy organising our annual conference and AGM which, this year, will take place at the Easterbrook Hall, Dumfries on Friday 20th November. We are delighted that Eric Robson has agreed to make a space in his busy schedule to give the keynote address. Eric will be well known to many of you in various guises including his roles as TV and radio presenter, as well as being Chairman of Cumbria Tourism and local resident. With a packed and varied programme in store, including the launch of the Solway Energy Gateway Feasibility Study, we are anticipating a lively and informative event. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

**Gordon Mann OBE**  
Chairman, Solway Firth Partnership



Front cover: Edible periwinkle by Laurie Campbell. Laurie is one of Scotland's leading natural history and landscape photographers. He began photographing wildlife in 1972, and later studied photography at Napier University in Edinburgh, and has since worked almost exclusively in Scotland, travelling from his Borders home to all parts of the country. For more information see [www.lauriecampbell.com](http://www.lauriecampbell.com)



# Learn something new at the Sulwath Centre

Ella McLellan, Mersehead RSPB Reserve



## What was the last thing you learned?

Take a moment to think about it. My guess is that you will come across something new that you have learned in the last month, week or even today. Perhaps it was simply a new recipe? Something you saw on television, the words to a new song or the reason your car was making that funny noise. Maybe you learned something harder to quantify, the value of taking time out, the importance of friendship, the way the light reflects on the sea at dusk, the simple beauty of a golden autumn leaf or just how good a cup of tea tastes after a hard day's work? Eartha Kitt famously once said "I am learning all the time. The tombstone will be my diploma".

**A**t the Mersehead RSPB reserve, near Southwick on the Solway Coast, a new centre has been opened, one that aims to promote learning in the broadest sense, for everyone. Converted from a nineteenth century farmhouse, the Sulwath Centre has been designed to enable and facilitate learning for all, regardless of age, ability or finances. Schools, colleges, community groups, adult learners, conservation groups, residential volunteers, special needs groups, artists, photographers and poets have already been using the fantastic new facilities it provides.

Named after the historical name for the Solway, The

Sulwath Centre was opened in April 2009 to promote lifelong learning, and has been created thanks to support from many organisations including Sulwath Connections, Solway Heritage, Leader+ and The Robertson Trust. Located in the heart of Mersehead RSPB Nature Reserve, the Centre incorporates education and training rooms, reception and office facilities, as well as providing accommodation for residential volunteers and field studies students. The Centre has many green credentials, including a wood pellet boiler and solar thermal panels.

The surrounding land is being transformed into wildlife gardens for particular use by visiting school children, and the old tennis court is developing into an all access sensory garden for mixed abilities, including raised ponds and planters for wheelchair users. RSPB Mersehead have a free education programme for primary schools, a popular residential volunteers scheme and superb meeting facilities for interested local groups.

So next time you want to inspire someone to learn, or learn something new yourself, perhaps you or your group might come and visit RSPB Mersehead. Find out more about our reserve and the Sulwath Centre online at [www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/m/mersehead/index.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/m/mersehead/index.asp), or simply type 'RSPB Mersehead' into any search engine. Or you can call us on 01387 780579 or 01387 780298.

**Top Right:** Boots outside the Sulwath Centre. Photo by Ella McLellan

**Top Left:** Inside the Sulwath Centre looking out. Photo by Ella McLellan



# Marine renewable energy proposals for the Solway

As global fossil fuel supplies dwindle, and UK and Scottish Governments commit to dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions over the next 10 years, the market for clean, renewable energy is increasing rapidly.

**W**ith its prevailing south westerly winds and one of the highest tidal ranges in the UK, the Solway Firth has the potential to generate a significant amount of renewable power to help meet the UK's target of 15% of its energy requirement from renewable energy sources by 2020. The Solway is already home to the Robin Rigg wind farm, with a possibility of further wind farm developments in the future. And with an average tidal range of 5.5 metres, the highest in the UK after the river Severn, the Solway is also a potential source of renewable marine energy.

The Solway Energy Gateway (SEG) is a new organisation which has been established to investigate the feasibility of marine renewable energy production through the Solway's vast tidal energy, and the Solway Energy Gateway Feasibility Project held its first meeting on 10th July at the Northwest Regional Development Agency in Warrington. A wide range of marine energy technology options are currently being discussed by the Group including a tidal barrage from Bowness-on-Solway on the Cumbrian coast across to Annan on the Dumfries and Galloway coast. The power generated by this scheme could then be fed into the national grid through the nearby Chapelcross nuclear power station, which is currently

being decommissioned. An article on a proposed barrage and tidal energy scheme was written by Nigel Catterson of Nb21c and printed in issue 31, the Summer/Autumn 2009 edition, of *Tidelines* (see the downloads page of our web site for a pdf copy of *Tidelines*). Any decisions made regarding the choice of technology will be assessed against its environmental impact on one of the most highly designated and protected regions in the UK.

This meeting was also the inaugural meeting of the Project Review group which comprises representatives of the North West Regional Development Agency, Scottish Enterprise and the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency who together have provided £100,000 to fund the feasibility project; Halcrow, who will carry out the feasibility study in a consortium with Mott MacDonald, an engineering and development consultancy, and RSK Environment Ltd who will undertake the environmental work; Envirolink Northwest who aid the development and growth of the energy and environmental technologies and services sector in the north west of England; Nb21c who was responsible for the conception, development and promotion of the Solway Energy Gateway; and Solway Firth Partnership whose role in the Project will be to

facilitate the passage of information between its members, the people of the Solway, stakeholders, interest groups, and the Solway Energy Gateway project teams.

One of the key aims of the SEG is to keep the public informed of developments in the project, and up-to-date information is available on the SEG web site at [www.solwayenergygateway.co.uk](http://www.solwayenergygateway.co.uk). The initial findings of the feasibility study will also be presented at the Partnership's Annual Conference in November - please see our web site at [www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk](http://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk) for more information.

- The UK Government has a statutory target to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by at least 26% (compared to 1990) by 2020.
- The UK Government is aiming for renewable energy forming more than 30% of electricity, 12% of heat and 10% of transport energy demands by 2020
- The Scottish Government has a statutory target to reduce Scotland's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by at least 80% by 2050, with an interim target of at least 42% emissions reductions by 2020.
- The Scottish Government is aiming for 50% of Scottish demand for electricity to be met from renewable sources by 2020, with a milestone of 31% by 2011



# Sulewath; The Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership



Intermediate sundew found in the Solway wetlands. Photo by Rose Wolfe

The Solway Wetland's Group, comprising a partnership of Natural England, Solway Coast AONB, RSPB, the NFU (representing local farmers), Environment Agency, Cumbria Tourism and local community organisations, is preparing a bid for Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Landscape Partnership funding as a First Round Application in November 2009.

The objective of the work is to enhance, protect and promote wetland habitat development in the South Solway, involving the local community in a range of interlinked projects intended to maximise the Solway's capacity for carbon storage, as well as provide a resource for local communities and encourage new visitors and investment.

General Project Development contained within the integrated vision of the Partnership is intended to include:

1. Extension of existing wetland areas in cooperation with local landowners through ground breaking pilot initiatives.
2. Consolidation of the existing mire communities through habitat regeneration and nutrient controls.
3. Provision of new access and interpretative facilities for visitors involving participation in development by local schools and community groups.
4. Encouragement of exploration, through sustainable means, of wetland environments, as a tool towards enhancing popular understanding of climate change processes and the huge role played (locally and globally) by wetlands in carbon sequestration.

A paper was commissioned by Natural England on behalf of the group to more closely identify the key individual projects and their locations, indicate appropriate mechanisms and programmes, and identify active local partners that would participate in the bid and development processes. If the HLF bid is successful, the Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership envisage that the programme of works which will result will provide not only a best practice example of new working within a rapidly changing and challenging situation of advancing climate change, but will make a substantial new contribution to the economic and cultural life of a beautiful (if little appreciated beyond its boundaries), historic and ecologically valuable landscape area.

**Rose Wolfe, AONB Unit, Silloth**

**Sulewath: from the Norse meaning the ford at the mouth of the River Esk**



AONB Rangers lead a guided walk on Campfield marshes. Photo by Rose Wolfe



## Richard Lochhead and SSACN launch sea angling study at Drummore

A Government sponsored study into the value of Scottish sea angling undertaken by Glasgow Caledonian University was released on 29th July 2009, and shows that Scottish sea angling is worth more than £140 million a year to the Scottish economy. And according to the study, in Dumfries and Galloway sea angling supports over 500 jobs and contributes more than £25 million each year across a broad spectrum of businesses, 97% of which is directly associated with touring anglers who spend over 230,000 days fishing in the region and who provide income to a broad variety of suppliers, especially those in the accommodation, food and drink, boat and angling supply sectors.

The study report, Economic Impact of Recreational Sea Angling in Scotland, was released at a meeting in the Clashwhannan in Drummore, Dumfries and Galloway, where Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, met with representatives of the Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network (SSACN), local politicians and business leaders.

One of the highlights of the day was when Mr Lochhead went for a short fishing trip on board SSACN's Project Director Ian Burrett's boat – for a start he really enjoyed it, then perhaps surprised himself by catching some pollock, but was then even more surprised when Ian told him that they had to go back, as Ian's boats only fish 'catch and return' – now that's sustainable fishing!



Cabinet Minister Richard Lochhead catches a pollock in Luce Bay (photo courtesy The Herald)

Following the meeting, Mr Lochhead said: "This ground breaking report shows that the popular sport of sea angling lands thousands of jobs and millions of pounds for Scotland," and continued "The potential for further development is huge and the next step must be to set up a group to take forward a development strategy." SSACN understands the group is expected to comprise sea angling representative bodies, local authorities, tourist agencies, marine scientists and other representative bodies, and will be tasked with delivering a strategic plan before the next Holyrood election.

SSACN would like to thank all those who actively supported the Study and provided input to the survey.

The report Technical Report: Economic Impact of Recreational Sea Angling in Scotland is available on-line at [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/31154700/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/31154700/0)

**Taken from SSACN press release**



# The Marine Bills:

## A Single Planning Process for the Solway Firth



There have been important developments in recent months regarding integration of the UK Marine and Coastal Access Bill and the Marine (Scotland) Bill on the Solway Firth. Local MPs, MSPs, Solway Firth Partnership board of trustees, members, partners, colleagues and staff have all worked extremely hard to highlight the unique local situation and the need for a tailored approach to implementation of the Marine Bills to ensure effective cross border management of the area.

In June, Solway Firth Partnership was delighted to assist with a visit of the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs and Environment Committee as part of their scrutiny of the Marine (Scotland) Bill. Members of the Committee visited Mersehead RSPB Reserve and met with local people involved in the management of the Solway Firth to hear first-hand about the challenges and opportunities the area faces. Later in the day, the Committee held its first ever meeting in Kirkcudbright to gather evidence from witnesses including Solway Firth Partnership, Scottish Renewables and the British Ports Association. Committee Convener Maureen Watt said:

"People living around the Solway Firth know that it is a precious resource. It is crucial to ensure that it is well-managed in the years to come. That is what our scrutiny of this legislation is intended to achieve, and exploring practical issues about marine management with local people is a vital part of the scrutiny process. Our discussions focused on locally important issues including the impact of offshore renewable developments, sustainable fishing, cross border issues and the importance of

protecting the marine environment and the wildlife dependent on it."

The Rural Affairs and Environment Committee Report was published on 8th October and Elaine Murray MSP, a member of the Committee, said:

"The Committee report states that the case for treating the Solway Firth, as much as is practicable, as a single area for marine planning purposes is clear. The Committee recognises that the Marine (Scotland) Bill cannot, of itself, produce a solution. There should be action at a UK level too and we hope that the UK Bill will not be enacted in such a way as to place obstacles in the way of effective cross-border working in the Solway area."

As part of a sustained campaign to raise awareness and understanding of issues and opportunities associated with enactment of the Marine Bills, Solway Firth Partnership held an open event at Tullie House in Carlisle on 9th October where south west Scotland MPs Russell Brown and David Mundell, and Carlisle MP, Eric Martlew, joined forces to express support for a single marine planning approach for the Solway Firth. Elaine Murray MSP, local Councillors, Solway Firth

Partnership Board members, representatives of a range of organisations and local people attended to find out more and express their views.

Russell Brown MP, David Mundell MP and Eric Martlew MP signed a joint letter to Huw Irranca Davies MP, Minister for the Marine and Natural Environment, supporting a single planning approach for the Solway Firth. Scottish Coastal Forum, North West Coastal Forum, Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee, local authorities, organisations and individuals on both sides of the Solway also submitted letters seeking assurance of a well integrated approach to cross border marine planning and management.

On 15th October, Huw Irranca Davies MP, Minister for the Marine and Natural Environment, Russell Brown MP, members of the Defra Marine Bill team and Solway Firth Partnership met in Westminster. The meeting was very positive and while the legal position requires two plans for the Solway, agreement has been reached that there should be a single planning process including Solway-wide stakeholder consultation. Other points under discussion included the opportunity to publish

plans as a single document with an explanation of the way in which they integrate in order to present a seamless approach to marine spatial planning for the Solway Firth within the context of a Marine Policy Statement. Steps are now underway to ensure there is wider endorsement of this approach which is expected to be formalised in a Concordat between the UK Government and the Scottish Parliament.

UK and Scottish Marine Bills will undergo final parliamentary scrutiny over the coming weeks and are expected to become Acts during the course of this winter. Both Bills aim to achieve sustainable management of the marine environment balancing protection of landscape and wildlife with demand for development and use of the sea and are strongly welcomed by a wide range of organisations including Solway Firth Partnership.

Solway Firth Partnership would like to thank everyone who has played a part in helping to ensure that the needs of the local area are fully taken into account at a time when the scene has been set for marine planning and management for many years to come.



# Salmon to benefit from planned improved water flows in the Kircudbrightshire Dee

**T**he Kircudbrightshire Dee is the second largest river system in Dumfries and Galloway with a catchment covering 1020 km<sup>2</sup>. It was well known in the past as supporting excellent numbers of salmon and serviced a healthy rod and net fishery.

The Dee has a long history of aggressive exploitation, of serious predation and of anthropogenic impact. These problems have combined to significantly reduce the salmon runs entering the river to only around 1000 fish a year (recorded accurately by a VAKI fish counter on Tongland Fish Ladder).



## More information on Marine Bills

You can follow the progress of the Scottish Bill at [www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/25-MarineScot/index.htm](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/25-MarineScot/index.htm), and the UK Marine and Coastal Access Bill at [www.parliament.uk/business/bills\\_and\\_legislation.cfm](http://www.parliament.uk/business/bills_and_legislation.cfm). For the most up to date information, including the text of the UK Marine and Coastal Access Bill see [www.defra.gov.uk/marine/legislation/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/marine/legislation/index.htm). For a useful comparison between the UK and Scottish Bills visit <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-09/SB09-59.pdf>. Links to Marine Bill updates can be found on the Solway Firth Partnership website at [www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk](http://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk)

### Photos Left Page:

**Left:** The Scottish Parliament Rural Affairs and Environment Committee visiting the Solway in June.

**Centre:** David Mundell MP signing the joint letter at his office in Dumfries.

**Right:** Eric Martlew MP and Russell Brown MP (seated) signing a joint letter of support for a single planning approach for the Solway Firth; Elaine Murray MSP and Gordon Mann, Chairman of Solway Firth Partnership (standing). Cast of a loggerhead turtle recently washed ashore at Sillioth kindly provided by Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery.

The Galloway hydro-electric scheme (which dates from the 1929 Galloway Act) changed the character and hydrology of the river system dramatically. Impacts on fish migration (both upstream & downstream) and river flows have been particularly damaging.

In 2007 the Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT) and The Carnie Consultancy produced a 5 year Salmon Fishery Plan for the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board (DDSF) and ScottishPower (SP). This plan examined closely the various problems threatening the salmon populations and listed recommendations of work required to return fish stocks back to historical healthy numbers.

Exciting new proposals have recently been suggested by SP which will help take forward many of the main recommendations of the Dee salmon plan. The proposed work, which will help SP to meet the EU Water Framework Directive objectives and other recent Fisheries Management works can be found at the following websites <http://www.spenergywholesale.com/userfiles/file/GallowayWFD.pdf> and

<http://www.spenergywholesale.com/userfiles/file/Gallowayfisheriesmanagement.pdf>

The DDSFB and GFT are very supportive of the suggested proposals for the Dee believing they will result in significant improvements for the river's salmon. To undertake the substantial targeted improvements listed below, SP plan to vary the present flow arrangement from the Galloway Hydros which discharges down both the Dee and Doon rivers. Concerns have been raised by Doon fishery interests regarding any reduction in flows down their river. Ultimately SEPA will decide whether the SP proposals are acceptable and will deliver overall ecological benefits. SEPA will undertake a period of statutory

consultation prior to making any decision on possible changes.

The proposed work includes:

- Optimising water flows to benefit all river and water bodies associated with Galloway hydro scheme in three stages with key dates of 2015, 2021 and 2027.
- Release a compensation flow and install a fish pass on the Pullaugh Burn (presently water abstraction dries out the lower 1300 metres of the burn).
- Significantly increase the compensation flow in the Black Water of Dee downstream of Clatteringshaws Reservoir (this will improve the suitability of over 9000 metres of the Black Water for fish)
- Significantly increase river flows between Tongland Dam and the sea (this will help adult salmon to get into the river and reduce predation and poaching problems).
- Modifying the flow below Loch Doon to provide a more variable flow that replicates seasonal weather patterns and natural conditions.
- Increase compensation flow below Earlstoun and Carsfad dams (this would create more suitable nursery salmon habitat below the dams).
- Investigate the possibility of fitting a fish pass at Kendoon reservoir (this would allow spawning salmon to access the extensive headwater areas of the Water of Deugh / upper Water of Ken and all their associated tributaries).

These proposals would greatly improve instream habitats for a range of fish species on the Dee, especially salmon and are firmly supported by the GFT and DDSFB.

**Jamie Ribbens, Galloway Fisheries Trust**



# Dumfries and Galloway Catchment Management Initiative

working in partnership to deliver conservation projects

The Dumfries and Galloway Catchment Management Initiative began in 2000 as a pilot project with the aim of delivering the objectives contained within the wetland section of the Dumfries and Galloway Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Since then the Initiative has published catchment management plans for the Annan, Dee-Ken and Nith river catchments.

Since their publication, the Initiative has been engaged in partnership working to create and deliver projects that address some of the actions identified in the catchment management plans. It is only by successfully engaging river users, landowners and stakeholders that sustainable improvements can be made that deliver water quality and habitat improvements at a catchment scale.

## Whitesands Interpretation Project Nith Catchment

The River Nith flows through Dumfries town centre at an area known as the Whitesands. The river here is ecologically rich but anti-social behaviour has led to problems with litter and over time this has created a negative public image. This project sought to draw



© SNH

people's attention to the positive aspects of the River Nith by erecting interpretation boards providing information about its rich and diverse wildlife. The project was undertaken in partnership with the River Nith Society and funding was provided by Dumfries and Galloway Council, SEPA and SNH.

## Fishing for Knowledge Across D&G

This innovative project, which began in May this year, introduces children and young people between the ages of 4 and 12 to the freshwater environment. A series of training sessions are delivered in the class room and on the local river providing education about freshwater ecology, health & safety and fishing. The sessions culminate in a 2 hour fishing session which gives children the opportunity to take up angling as a hobby. The project is running over 3 years and 10 primary schools each year are being given the opportunity to participate. The project was undertaken in partnership with Solway Heritage, Fishery Management Organisations and Borderlines. Funding was provided by LEADER, SNH and SEPA.



© Solway Heritage

## Working Towards Best Practice Dee-Ken catchment

Phase I of this project provided open days on a number of selected farms to showcase best management practice for farmland birds, hedgerows, wetlands and sustainable farm drainage systems. Phase II took things a step further by encouraging landowners/farmers to have phase 1 vegetations surveys and FWAG farm biodiversity audits carried out. A wetlands and wildlife best practice leaflet was also produced and distributed to all farms in the catchment. The project was awarded the "Caring for the Environment" Leader+ Rural Award for 2007.



© SEPA

## Non-native Invasive Species Project Across D&G

Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam have aggressively colonised many catchments in Dumfries & Galloway. Phase I of this project set out to map the extent of these species on the Rivers Annan and Nith. A leaflet for each catchment was produced to raise awareness of the problems caused and the Catchment Management Initiative is now working with fishery boards and trusts across D&G to implement phase II of the project, which will seek to vastly reduce the extent of these species over a 5 year period.



© SEPA

## River Annan water vole and mink trapping project Annan Catchment

This project has the dual aims of reducing the mink population through a co-ordinated trapping programme, whilst collecting valuable information about water vole populations. The project is a partnership with the Annan District Salmon Fishery Board. The project utilises the Game & Wildfowl Conservation Trust's mink raft, which incorporates a clay pad to monitor the paw prints of animals visiting the raft. The project has trapped in excess of 60 mink during 2009 and discovered 4 previously unrecorded water vole populations.



© Game & Wildfowl Conservation Trust

*Paul Sutherland, Catchment Initiative Specialist, SEPA*



# SSACN's Sharktag attracts anglers from all over the UK

**T**he greatest shark tagging event ever held in Scotland, the UK, and probably in the world – that was the overall verdict of those who took part in the Sharktag in June this summer, organised by the Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network ([www.ssacn.org](http://www.ssacn.org)).

The Sharktag, one of the many events of World Oceans Week 2009, was centred around Luce Bay. 215 anglers of all ages and abilities attended the event, coming from as far away as Cornwall and Caithness, and fishing from boats, kayaks and the shore to catch, tag and release various shark species. The event had three goals - to highlight the perilous state of endangered shark species; to start gathering some of the data to support claims for their protection; and to continue to press politicians to recognise the needs of the sea angling community and its contribution to the Scottish economy.

The SSACN project team who put the event together were totally blown away by the response and support received from anglers, local hoteliers, shops, caravan parks and local skippers, as well as the kind words and support given by local people, and messages of support continued to arrive following the nationwide TV, radio, internet and written media attention.

However, although the social side was fantastic, the fishing was less so. Ian Burrett, SSACN's Project Director, said "Around two hundred tope, smoothhound and bull huss were tagged over the three days - and that can only be described as poor compared to what the total should have been." Ian continued "the fish caught were mostly immature females, typically under 20 pounds, and a few solitary females in the 50-60 pound range; Luce Bay was especially poor for the time of year. Combined with the lack of rays tagged - only three throughout Sharktag - it shows how urgently plans are needed to help protect and regenerate the stocks. Twenty year ago virtually every boat would have recorded several mature tope and rays."



Kristine's first tope. Picture courtesy of SSACN © Marc Marnie - Photographer

A Spokesman for SSACN said "for decades, governments and fisheries managers have made decisions regarding exploitation by the catching sector without the full knowledge of the state of fish stocks and the marine environment." He went on to explain that effective fisheries management is often hampered by 'an insufficiency of data'. To help overcome that insufficiency, the information gathered during Sharktag will feed into SSACN's Scottish Shark Tagging Programme (SSTP - [www.tagsharks.com](http://www.tagsharks.com)) which has been introduced to act as a central clearing point for all data regarding shark, skate and ray stocks in Scottish coastal waters.

He continued "Without regeneration, not only will Scotland's marine biodiversity lose more species, but the huge annual income which sea angling contributes to the Scottish and Solway economies will also suffer badly. With a little political will and some proactive measures, the biodiversity losses could be halted and the Solway could become a European centre of excellence for sea angling."

Registered taggers will continue the work year round on targeted species, but the next SSACN-organised major tagging event will be the annual spurdog 'Tagathon' on 14th and 15th November in the waters around Loch Sunart and the Sound of Mull. Visit [www.ssacn.org/spurdog-tagathon](http://www.ssacn.org/spurdog-tagathon) for more information.

## Closing the net on illegal fishing

**A**ction has been taken recently to clamp down on illegal netting activity on the north Solway coast. The nets are set to catch bass which provide good eating and have a high market value. Catching and selling these fish legally is fine, but problems are arising from the use of illegal gill nets. These nets are often set close to river mouths and, as well as catching bass, intercept other species including salmon and sea trout.

Jamie Ribbens of Galloway Fisheries Trust says, "We've been concerned about this issue for some time. These illegal nets are killing many threatened fish species which is such a waste. We're delighted by the way Marine Scotland Compliance, Galloway Fisheries Trust and all the Salmon Fishery Boards across the region have pulled together to combat this illegal activity. Populations of salmon and sea trout are a concern and we need to do everything we can to protect existing stocks."

Solway Firth Partnership has acted as a catalyst in getting action underway and has been in a unique position to highlight the sharp contrast in approaches to regulation of netting on the north and south sides of the Solway. Pam Taylor of Solway Firth Partnership says, "Netting is a traditional and legitimate use of the Solway. What we are concerned about are illegal nets – these include monofilament nets, nets directly affecting migratory fish and nets which pose a hazard to navigation."

Gregor McKenzie of Marine Scotland Compliance says, "Helicopter and foot patrols have been carried out from the inner Solway Firth to Luce Bay as a result of the reports we've received. Equipment has been taken in these operations and we will be maintaining an increased level of surveillance in the area in future. We have also been visiting hotels and other outlets to remind owners of the laws governing the buying and selling of fish. If you would like more information about any of these issues, or if you see a net which you suspect may be illegal please contact us on 0845 270 3990."



# Seasearch off the beaten track in Luce Bay

Calum Duncan, MCS Scottish Conservation Manager,  
Seasearch Scotland Co-ordinator

Calum recently provided a Seasearch training weekend and follow-up dives for Newton Stewart Sub Aqua Club (NSSAC), with the aim of obtaining and recording data on the underwater marine life of Luce Bay. The training was organised by Solway Firth Partnership and generously funded by Scottish Natural Heritage.

Calum describes how the diving went.....

Following the Seasearch Observation Course run for NSSAC in May, Solway Firth Partnership (SFP) invited me to return in June to help the club get Seasearch records for Luce Bay, a European Marine Site. Club lore confirmed the weather rarely plays ball and so most club diving is on known good dive sites sheltered in Wigtown Bay to the east. However, they gamely moved their RIB from its usual Isle of Whithorn mooring to launch at Port William and were rewarded with calm seas during the final weekend of World Oceans Week.

Thanks to the club's experienced divers and skippers, Saturday worked like clockwork. Seven of us on the club RIB planed in good conditions to outer Luce Bay, the largest of its kind in Europe so I'm told, and the wreck of the MV Kelvinside, lying in 27 metres on clean tideswept shell and gravel seabed with lush hornwrack and dahlia anemones. Soft corals and plumose anemones clung to the wreck itself whilst shoals of bib and numerous wrasse added life and motion to a scene resplendent through 12 metres visibility.

Later that afternoon, a few hundred metres off the Port William slipway, a

few of us dived a shallow sunlit site luxuriant with seaweed, sheltering small wrasse and snake pipefish. A chunky lone barrel jellyfish (*Rhizostoma octopus*), silhouetted against the westering sun, drifting serenely by and a swarm of sea gooseberries refracting tiny rainbows in the surface waters ended a dream diving day. To cap it all, the club had pitched tents and got a barbecue going at the Port William campsite – rarely has a beer and burger tasted so good!

Sunday dawned flat calm, sun glinting on the bay and the Scare rocks solid on the horizon. After manning the stalls in the World Oceans Day Celebration marquee at Port William that included MCS, NSSAC and the Scottish Sea Anglers Conservation Network, who were running their successful 'Shark-a-Tag' event that weekend, the RIB set off for the 'Scares' as the mist closed in. Luckily it kept sufficient distance to allow safe diving, but added prehistoric atmosphere as the notorious rock islets loomed into view.

After appreciating the ancient hubbub of roosting gannets, we dived over tideswept rock and boulder reefs with hornwrack, soft corals and one wall of white *Sagartia* anemones, eventually ascending into rich, dense kelp forests in the shallows, a clean amber canopy of leathery blades. Perhaps not as dramatic as the Kelvinside for some on board, but undoubtedly wild and little explored!

Back on the NSSAC RIB the general consensus was that the dive had been scenic but not as good as the previous day's wreck dive. But the Scare rocks in outer Luce Bay was my favourite of the weekend, encapsulating what Seasearch

is all about, recording remoter sites because they are there.

We only just scratched the surface in Luce Bay, and there is so much more to discover and record, including historic accounts of maerl in the outer bay. Luce Bay undoubtedly contains some great diving, but question marks remain about how human activities are impacting upon it. I look forward to future collaboration to help the club become local Seasearch experts for their patch and help them contribute toward managing this unique European marine Special Area of Conservation. The more we find out about our wild underwater landscapes, the more we can help protect them. Have your say on where you would like to see protected by visiting [www.yourseasyourvoice.com](http://www.yourseasyourvoice.com).

Many thanks to Jim, Phil, Frank, Mel and all at NSSAC for organising the diving, towing the RIB and putting on a great barbecue, Pam and Sue at SFP and to SNH for supporting the weekend.

For general Seasearch enquiries in Scotland visit [www.seasearch.org.uk](http://www.seasearch.org.uk), contact Calum Duncan on 0131 226 6360 email [scotland@mcsuk.org](mailto:scotland@mcsuk.org) or write to Marine Conservation Society, 3 Coates Place, Edinburgh, EH3 7AA.

Further information:  
[www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org) > what we do > MCS in Scotland  
[www.seasearch.org.uk](http://www.seasearch.org.uk)  
[www.searchnbn.net](http://www.searchnbn.net)  
[www.marinereservesnow.org.uk](http://www.marinereservesnow.org.uk)  
[www.yourseasyourvoice.com](http://www.yourseasyourvoice.com)  
[www.nsddivers.co.uk](http://www.nsddivers.co.uk) Newton Stewart Sub-Aqua Club

[www.lucebayandsandssac.co.uk](http://www.lucebayandsandssac.co.uk) Luce Bay marine Special Area of Conservation





# Divers urged to search for crawfish – but not for eating!

**S**easearch is urging divers throughout Britain and Ireland to be on the lookout for crawfish (sometimes known as crayfish or spiny lobster), on their dives. The crawfish is the largest crustacean in our waters and, whilst it used to be commonly seen in the waters around our coasts it has become increasingly rare due to overfishing.

Unlike the lobster, which is much better known and still relatively common, the crawfish does not have the protection of large claws. This has made it very easy for divers to take for the pot. It also is more active than lobster, and large numbers have been taken by tangle netting. Because it is now so rare it has been put on the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan species list, making it a priority for conservation.

Seasearch wants divers to tell us where they are currently seeing crawfish, how many they see and what size they are. This will help to build up a picture of current populations in shallow waters and help us to identify hotspots where protection is needed. Recording is easy and results can be entered online at [www.seasearch.org.uk](http://www.seasearch.org.uk)

We will not be producing detailed maps for where to find crawfish, which would be counter-productive, and we are urging divers who see them to record their presence and leave them there. As what is now a relatively rare species, divers should not take crawfish even for their own consumption.

In addition to getting an up to date picture of where crawfish occur we are urging divers to look back through their old logbooks and tell us where they have seen them in the past. The information can be entered online in exactly the same way.

Seasearch is the largest organisation in Britain and Ireland for recreational divers who want to do their bit for the marine environment. Details of all Seasearch activities, including training courses and survey dives, can be found on the Seasearch website at [www.seasearch.org.uk](http://www.seasearch.org.uk)

## Seasearch helping to record the underwater environment

**S**easearch is the largest organisation in Britain and Ireland for recreational divers who want to do their bit for the marine environment, enabling them to contribute to protecting marine wildlife through recording underwater habitats and the plants and animals they support. Seasearch offers training in marine recording, organises surveys of species and habitats through dives and survey expeditions, and produces data and reports which are available for all to use. A busy programme of Seasearch diving, supported by SNH, has been co-ordinated by MCS in Scotland since 2000 which has resulted in many expeditions and courses involving hundreds of divers returning over 1,500 records. These are all on the National Biodiversity Network.

Seasearch is co-ordinated by the Marine Conservation Society on behalf of the Seasearch Steering Group which comprises the Marine Conservation Society, Wildlife Trusts, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, Environment and Heritage Service Northern Ireland, Environment Agency, Marine Biological Association, Nautical Archaeological Society, British Sub Aqua Club, Sub Aqua Association, Professional Association of Diving Instructors, Scottish Sub Aqua Club, Irish Underwater Council and independent marine life experts.

Top Right: The underwater world in Luce Bay can be very beautiful and colourful. Photo by Jim Gibson

Top Left: Newton Stewart Sub-Aqua Club set out for their Seasearch dives. Photo by Allison McAllister

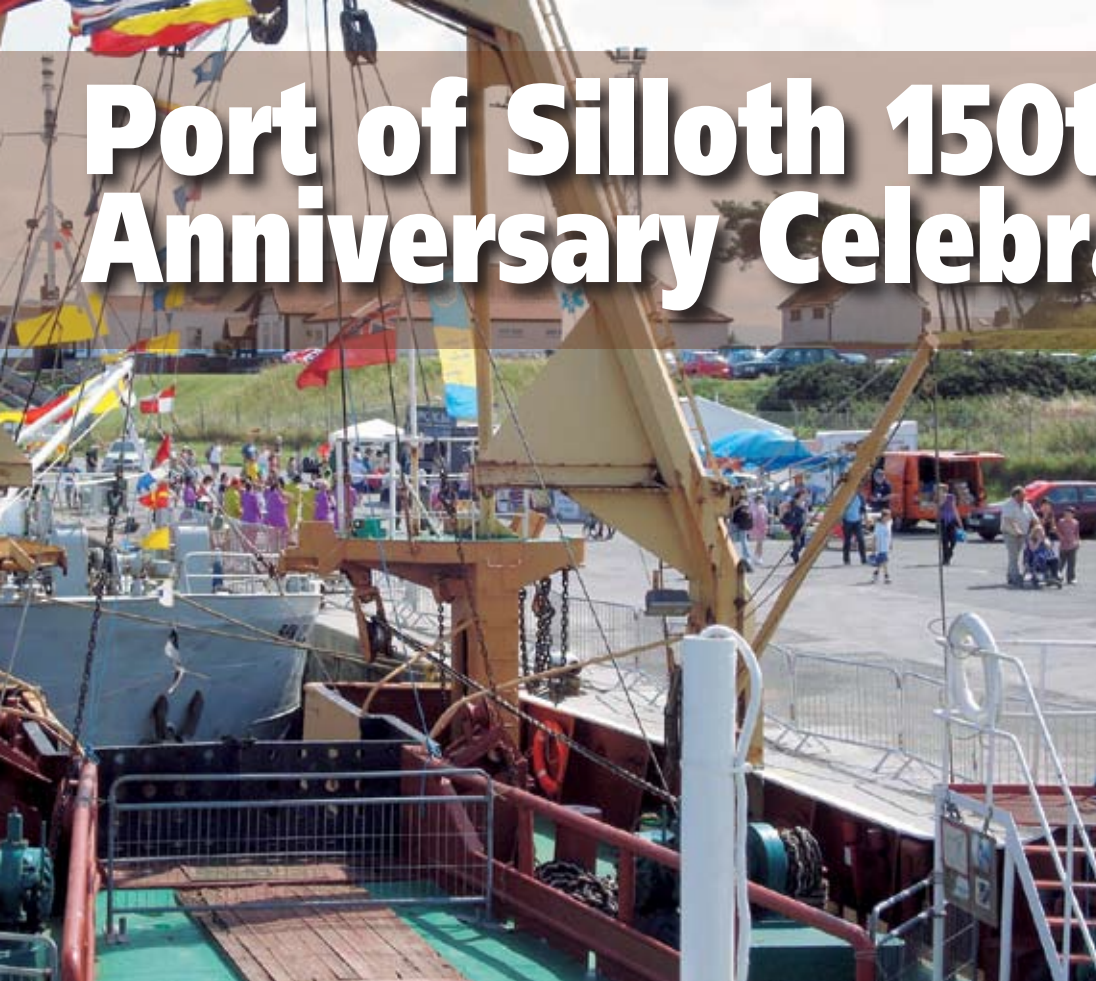


Crawfish, crayfish or spiny lobster – three names for one species! Photo courtesy of MCS





# Port of Silloth 150th Anniversary Celebrations



Loading the Canon. Photo Chris Puxley



Crowds enjoying Silloth's 150th Anniversary Celebration. Photo Chris Puxley

**M**onday 3rd August 2009 was the 150th anniversary of the official opening of Silloth Dock and to commemorate this special event the unveiling took place in the town of an intricately carved and suitably inscribed large wooden plaque. The Silloth Dock, which at the opening ceremony was formally entitled "Marshall Dock", after the Cumberland MP who had supported this great business venture, was a new trading facility completed in 1859 on the Cumberland shore of the Solway Firth to provide a relatively deep-water port for the many, but at that time predominantly cotton manufacturing, industries of the City of Carlisle.

The plaque was unveiled by Mr Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive of the North West Development Agency. Local dignitaries and the general public were invited to attend the unveiling ceremony, hosted by the specially formed 'Port of Silloth 150 Committee'. After the ceremony and speeches, invited guests attended a reception at the Golf Hotel in Silloth. In due course, it is anticipated that the plaque will be displayed at the Solway Coast Discovery Centre.

From Monday 3rd August until Sunday 16th August 2009, Harbour Master Captain Chris Puxley hosted an exhibition of historic archives, photographs, charts, plans, artefacts, models, paintings and displays, all relating to The Port of Silloth. A central focal point was a model of the docks

and the associated extensive railway system as it was in the 1920s. The two-week long exhibition was held at the Solway Coast Discovery Centre in Silloth, courtesy of the local AONB, a building that also doubles as the Silloth Tourism Information Centre.

On Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th August 2009, Silloth's Harbour Master opened up The Port of Silloth to the public. Several interesting vessels had come to Silloth for the public to view and go aboard. They included the heritage deep-sea trawler "Jacinta" from Fleetwood, the heritage tug "Brocklebank" from Liverpool Maritime Museum, an offshore RNLI 'Severn' class lifeboat, the topsail schooner "Vilma", which acted out the part of a pirate ship in several daily displays in New Dock with the re-enactment group of pirates and buccaneers called "Pubcat". Also attending were the UK Border Agencies cutter "Sentinel", the Solway fisheries protection vessel "Solway Protector", the Port of Workington tug "Derwent", a yacht from 'Sailing for the Disabled' and the cargo ships "Ben Ellan" and "Atlantica Hav". The Carlisle Model Boat Club had a display stall and demonstrated their working models on the waters of the New Dock. Strolling musicians, dancers and entertainers moved around the port and on to Silloth Green throughout both days.

Surrounding the New Dock were various stalls and displays, including a small kiddies funfair and various food outlets courtesy of Fletcher

Amusements, HM Coastguard, a climbing wall manned by the Royal Navy careers team, a 'Chris Jones' gyrocopter, a Police diving team boat, Carr's Flour Mill, who had a cake decorating challenge and also took parties to view the Mill Museum, DA Harrison stevedores, Ray's fresh Solway shrimp stall, Bernard McCall Coastal Shipping books and Tim Hudson mini-ship models, the RAF Association, John Stronach's Ship Agency office exhibition, RNLI souvenirs and the Great North Air Ambulance.

An 'Information & First Aid' tent was manned by the Silloth 1st Responders. Marshalling of the port area was provided by local volunteers and managed by Resource Marketing Ltd.

Within the outer Marshall Dock area, Silloth Inshore lifeboat, accompanied by rescue craft from Maryport and the River Nith, entertained the crowds with various high-speed manoeuvres and rescue demonstrations. When tidal conditions permitted, the dock gates to New Dock were opened and the rescue craft entered the New Dock briefly to parade before the appreciative crowds.

Aerial displays took place on both days between noon and 2pm, with an RN Seaking rescue helicopter on Saturday and an RAF Seaking rescue helicopter on Sunday. Both initially landed on Silloth Green for an hour, enabling the public to get up close to view the aircraft.

The helicopters then lifted off at 1pm





The topsail schooner 'Wilma'. Photo Chris Puxley

to undertake a rescue and winching demonstration with Sillioth lifeboat, along the waters close to promenade and dock entrance. Unfortunately, on Saturday the RN helicopter was called away to a real emergency, just as the demonstration was about to take place.

Later on the Saturday afternoon, at 3.45pm, the port was over-flown three times by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (Lancaster – Spitfire – Hurricane). This was to have been repeated on the Sunday afternoon, but had to be aborted due to poor weather elsewhere. Fortunately, the single remaining flying Vulcan bomber had recently been added to the programme for Sunday, making two passes over the port and compensated for the disappointment of not seeing the BOBMF that day.

Apart from a shower of rain on Sunday morning, both days were bright and sunny with a gentle SW breeze, giving the large crowd the ideal weather to see all the attractions, sideshows and stalls on offer. Ships and other craft were decorated overall and the three flag International Code signal UW2 signifying "Welcome" flew from the port's signal mast yardarm. Over the weekend, an estimated 12,000 people visited the port, far more than originally anticipated, and there were no reported accidents or incidents to mar the occasion. Although a 'free-entry' event, the crowds gave very generously to charity collection boxes and fundraising stalls, benefiting the RNLI, The Great North Air Ambulance, Help for Heroes and the Sillioth 1st Responders.

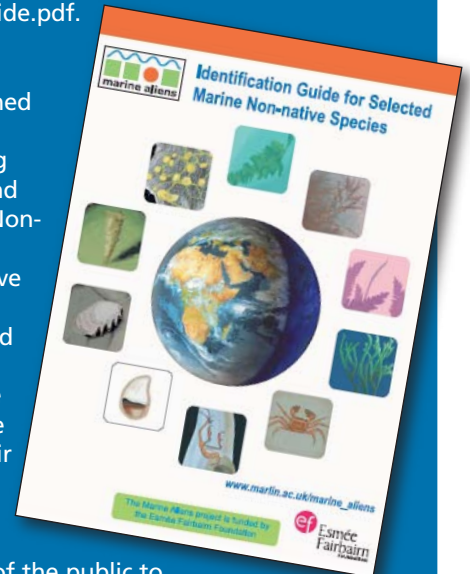
All in all, the events proved to be very successful and were an appropriate celebration of the 150 years to date, that the Port of Sillioth has served the community of Sillioth, the county of Cumbria and the NW England and Borders region.

**Capt Chris Puxley, Sillioth Harbour Master**

# Help to monitor non-native marine species in UK seas

**M**arLIN, the Marine Life Information Network, collates and distributes information for marine environmental management, protection and education. It has just published a new booklet, An identification guide for selected non-native species, which can be downloaded from its web site at [http://www.marlin.ac.uk/PDF/Aliens\\_IDguide.pdf](http://www.marlin.ac.uk/PDF/Aliens_IDguide.pdf).

There are around 65 established marine non-native species in UK waters, many found along coastlines and in estuaries, and also harbours and marinas. Non-native species have become established outside their native habitat, and pose a threat to marine biodiversity considered to be second only to habitat loss as they may out-compete indigenous species, or change or completely taken over their new environment.



MarLIN are asking members of the public to record (and photograph wherever possible) sightings of non-native marine species and report them on-line at [www.marlin.ac.uk/marine\\_alien](http://www.marlin.ac.uk/marine_alien).

## Environment Fair 2010

**T**he annual Dumfries and Galloway Environment Fair will be held at DGOne, the council run sports centre in Dumfries on Saturday 6th March 2010. There will be the usual mix of organisations attending to give families the opportunity to learn about the environment in an interactive, fun way. The ever popular storytelling and craft making will also be there again at this event.

## Dumfries and Galloway Wildlife Festival 2010

**T**he seventh Dumfries and Galloway Wildlife Festival will run from Friday 2nd April to Sunday 18th April 2010. There will be a range of new activities, yet to be decided for 2010, but also the chance to attend the favourite events such as badger watching at WWT Caerlaverock and visiting the Galloway Red Kite feeding station.



© Mike Hall



# World Oceans Week 2009



Going rock pooling at Port William



**W**orld Oceans' Day is celebrated world-wide on June 8th each year and has been celebrated annually in Dumfries and Galloway for many years. Celebration Days have been held at Rockcliffe since 1999, moving to Port William in 2007, and, following the increasing successes of World Oceans Day Celebrations, it was decided to make the 2009 an even bigger and better event – World Oceans Week!

World Oceans Week (WOW) 2009 was held on 6th – 14th June 2009, with 2 celebrations, one at Rockcliffe on June 7th and one at Port William on June 14th, and a week of marine themed activities all along the Dumfries and Galloway coast in between.

Visitors and locals alike enjoyed exhibitions, talks and guided walks which highlighted the stunning marine natural history of the spectacular Dumfries and Galloway coastline. There were Solway-themed exhibitions at the Mill on the Fleet Visitor Centre and

the Stewartry Museum at Kirkcudbright. A Marine Day at the Mull of Galloway RSPB reserve and a Mersehead Meander at the Mersehead RSPB reserve showed visitors some of the amazing and diverse bird life we have in Dumfries and Galloway, as well as explaining how the coastline influences the vegetation and ecosystems it supports. Several visitors enjoyed viewing the south Rhins coastline from a different perspective, wildlife watching on the Onyermarks charter boat which sailed out of Port Logan. Local marine experts were on hand at Seashore Safaris and Seashore Explorations at Rockcliffe and Mossyard beaches, to demonstrate and explain about the amazing creatures that live on our shores. WOW 2009 also included 2 beach cleans at Rockcliffe and Port William, where well over a quarter of a tonne of rubbish was collected at each beach, helping to make them clean and safe for wildlife, and helping the beaches look their best for their WOW 2009 Celebration events.

WOW 2009 was also an opportunity to gather information about Dumfries and Galloway's marine life. The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Society (SSACN) also held a Sharktag over 3 days as part of World Oceans

Week, with recreational sea anglers helping to tag sharks, rays and tope as part of an initiative to collect information to better help their conservation (see page 9). In Luce Bay, Newton Stewart British Sub Aqua Club carried out the Marine Conservation Society's SeaSearch training dives (see page 10); following training by MCS, Seasearch volunteers can help by mapping the distribution of rare, vulnerable or unusual species and habitats, ultimately helping in their conservation.

The first of the WOW 2009 Celebrations was held in 2 marquees on the beach at Rockcliffe, where hundreds of visitors enjoyed activities and displays from a wide variety of organisations including Dumfries and Galloway Ranger Service, E.ON Energy and Renewables, Geo-D (Dumfries and Galloway geology group), GreenBlue, Marine Conservation Society, National Trust for Scotland, Nith District Salmon Fisheries, the Marine and Coastguard Agency, RSPB, Jim and Pauline Logan – local marine biology experts, and Solway Firth Partnership. Cream O'Galloway ice creams and refreshments by Colvend Café were very popular with visitors who enjoyed picnics on the beach between activities such as rock pooling,

Seashore Safaris with local rangers and a guided walk to Castlehill Point to learn about the fascinating geology of the area with Nic Coombey of Solway Heritage.

WOW 2009 finished with a Celebration at Port William, with two large beach-side marquees housing displays and activities from British Trust for Ornithology, Dumfries and Galloway Council Ranger Service, the Forestry Commission, Galloway Fisheries Trust, Galloway Static Gear Fishermens' Association, Geo-D (Dumfries and Galloway local geology society), the GreenBlue, David Hirst - Port William resident with 'Larry the Lobster' aquarium, Jim and Pauline Logan - local marine biologists and their collection of Solway seashells, Marine Conservation Society, National Scenic Areas Communities Rangers, Newton Stewart Sub Aqua Club, Port William Inshore Lifeboat, RSPB Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network and Solway Firth Partnership. A popular draw at the Port William Celebration was the skeleton of a minke whale washed up on the local beach, and which local resident David Hirst had cleaned and laid out in the car park adjacent to the Celebration. The





*The Marine and Coastguard Agency display at Rockcliffe*

beautiful weather encouraged many visitors onto the beach where SSACN had a 'casting from the shore' demonstration, or borrowed buckets and spades to go rock pooling, or just enjoyed the day with a Cream O'Galloway ice cream sold in aid of Port William Inshore Lifeboat. In the morning a guided walk by Professor Jim Floyd to Monreith's Back Bay showed visitors how the fantastic geology of the area was formed millions of years ago, whilst in the afternoon talks on local geology, Solway seashells and SSACN's Sharktag event, plus a seafood cookery demonstration by local chef Douglas Lisi featuring locally caught seafood, were well attended in the Exhibition marquee. The booklet *Sea Food Sea Life*, produced by Solway Heritage, was officially launched at the beginning of the Douglas Lisi demonstration.

From the fantastic feedback we had from visitors and participants alike, WOW 2009 was a great success and we have already started planning WOW 2010! So keep your diaries free for World Ocean Day Celebration at Rockcliffe on Sunday 6th June, World Ocean Day Celebration on Sunday 13th June and a week of activities aimed at local schools in between. Watch our web site at [www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk](http://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk) for more information as it becomes available.

WOW 2009 was organised by Solway Firth Partnership, with assistance from National Scenic Area Communities Ranger Service, Dumfries and Galloway Ranger Service, David Hirst of Port William Residents' Association, and the communities of Rockcliffe and Port William. WOW 2009 was generously funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, E.ON Climate and Renewables, and Dumfries and Galloway Council through Stewartry Area Committee and Wigtown Area Committee. WOW 2009 was kindly supported by BBC Breathing Places programme (prize draw prizes and promotional material), Colvend Cafe (refreshments at Rockcliffe), Cream O'Galloway ice cream, DGAA Wigtownshire (organisation of WOW Port William Art and Photography competition), Forestry Commission (generator hire), Jessops Photographic (sponsorship of art and photography competition), West Skelston Hire (generator hire), and the large number of volunteers who generously gave their time to support and organise the many events and Celebrations of WOW 2009.

**Centre Top:** *Pauline Logan demonstrates some of the Solway's beautiful sea shells to visitors at the Port William Celebration. Photo by Jim Logan*

**Centre Bottom:** *David Hirst (far left) Ian Lomax and David Pedley with the skeleton of a minke whale washed up at Port William*

# Solway Firth Partnership Conference 2009

20th November 2009



- Keynote speaker – Eric Robson
- Marine Renewable Energy in the Solway - A Feasibility Study Launch by Solway Energy Gateway
- Pick 'n' mix – have your say on a wide range of Solway-themed issues
- And much more!

The Solway Firth Partnership's Annual Conference and AGM will be held this year on 20th November at the Easterbrook Hall on the Crichton Campus at Dumfries. And the Partnership is delighted that the Keynote Speaker at this year's Conference will be Eric Robson, well known as the Voice of BBC's Gardeners' Question Time, but better known for his Out of Town television series, exploring the Scottish and English countryside accompanied by the ever-faithful Raq, his 'dog-on-a-string'. Eric, originally born in Scotland, is also a Cumbrian sheep farmer, Chairman of the Wainwright Society and Chairman of the Cumbria Tourist Board, and is well known for his entertaining and informative talks about the local area.

The Conference will see the launch of Marine Renewable Energy in the Solway - A Feasibility Study Launch by Solway Energy Gateway. The Solway Firth has been assessed to identify sources of marine renewable energy, environmental designations and constraints have been mapped and the regional social demographics studied to recognise potential benefits and concerns. This base information has then been used to inform discussions around suitable energy technologies and identify a number of potentially feasible energy generation schemes for further investigation, and the findings will be presented at the Conference.

The Conference will also feature presentations about a wide range of Solway-themed issues, including the environment, local history and culture. New for this year will be the Pick'n'Mix sessions, a series of interactive short presentations which will allow for audience feedback on a wide range of topics – come along and have your say!

There will also be exhibitions in the foyer as well as displays from local organisations and a chance to learn about the huge range of activities and organisations on the Solway.

The Conference is free of charge and open to anyone with an interest in the Solway. The full programme will be available on our web site ([www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk](http://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk)) and will be sent out to our members and supporters shortly (please note that the programme may be subject to change at short notice if circumstances dictate). Booking is essential however, on a first-come-first-served basis.

For more information about Conference 2009 see our web site or contact the Partnership at the address on the back of Tidelines.

*Sand ripples. Photo by Susannah Bleakley*





# Join the Wild Goose Chase 2010 across Dumfries & Galloway!



Greylag goose. Photo by Andrew Blunsum

Dumfries & Galloway's Wild Goose Chase is back for March 2010. Every year, between September and May, Dumfries and Galloway plays host to tens of thousands of geese: barnacle, pink-footed, greylag, brent and Greenland white-fronted.

**T**hey come to escape the bitter winters of their Arctic breeding grounds, and join our resident population of Canada and greylag geese. Dumfries and Galloway is an ideal place for geese in the winter. It offers a mild climate, ample grass for them to eat, and plenty of safe roosting places on the sandbanks and sheltered waters of the Solway.

You can see our geese at sites along the Solway coast and Loch Ryan or enjoy this wonderful goose spectacle through a series of goose related events, guided walks and talks hosted by Dumfries & Galloway Council in partnership with NTS, RSPB, WWT and Castle Kennedy Gardens.

For more information on travel, accommodation or events please contact Elaine McClymont 07827848785 or email: [elaine.mcclymont@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.mcclymont@dumgal.gov.uk)

**Solway Firth Partnership strongly recommends that you check the details of each event beforehand, and cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies in this article.**

## **SUNDAY 28TH FEBRUARY** **11am – 4pm; Wild Goose Chase**

**Discovery Day** for all the family at National Trust for Scotland's Mains of Kelton, Threave Castle, Castle Douglas. Free but donations are welcomed. **For more information contact NTS (1)**

**WEDNESDAY 3RD MARCH**  
**10am-12 noon; Goose Guide in the hide** - spend time in our hide geese spotting at Mersehead Nature Reserve, Southwick, Dumfries DG2 8AH. Grid ref NX925561. This event is a free, with a goose guide to help identification plus binoculars and a telescope for you to use. **For more information contact Keeley Spate (2)**

**2.30pm – dusk; Goose guide in the hide at Wigtown Bay LNR.** Free event with binoculars, a telescope and identification books provided as well as the goose guide. Meet at the Wigtown Harbour Bird hide NX 438 551. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**SATURDAY 6TH MARCH**  
**5pm - 7pm; Gaggles of Geese Dusk Walk** - free guided walk starting at Wigtown County Buildings, Wigtown DG8 9JH to celebrate sunset with the geese of

Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**10 am to 3pm; Join the Goose Bus.** A really special day out - a bus with a guide, binoculars, telescopes and identification books to help you find and identify some of our local geese. Cost £10. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**10am to 3.30 pm; Environment Fair,** DG1 Leisure Centre, Dumfries. All the organisations taking part will be attending this Fair and will be in their own special Wild Goose Chase Corner with events and displays on geese. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**SUNDAY 7TH MARCH**  
**5.30am - 7.30am; Gaggles of Geese Dawn walk** - celebrate sunrise in spectacular surroundings with the geese of Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve, with a free dawn guided walk starting at Wigtown County Buildings, Wigtown DG8 9JH. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**10 am to 3pm; Join the Goose Bus** - A really special day out - a bus with a guide, binoculars, telescopes and identification books to help you find and identify some of our local geese. Cost £10. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**



## **6am to 5pm; Wild Goose Chase Day of events at WWT**

**Caerlaverock** Normal admission charges apply, WWT members free, catering not included in admission price. No additional charge for the Wild Goose Chase events. 6am Dawn flight; 11am - 2pm Guided walks; 4pm Goose illustrated talk. Bring warm waterproof clothing and boots and binoculars if possible. **For more information please contact Brian Morrell (4)**

### **WEDNESDAY 10TH MARCH**

**10am-12 noon; Goose Guide in the hide** - spend time in our hide geese spotting at Mersehead Nature Reserve, Southwick, Dumfries DG2 8AH. Grid ref NX925561. This event is a free, with a goose guide to help identification plus binoculars and a telescope for you to use. **For more information contact Keeley Spate (2)**

**2.30pm –dusk; Goose guide in the hide at Wigtown Bay LNR** Observe thousands of geese around Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve at this free event, binoculars, telescope and identification books provided as well as a goose guide. Meet at Wigtown Harbour Bird hide NX438551. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

### **THURSDAY 11TH MARCH**

**11am to 12noon; Meet the swans at Carlingwark Loch** - Come and learn more about the Carlingwark swans. Look for the DGC Ranger vehicle at Loch-side car park, Castle Douglas beside Carlingwark Loch. **For more information contact Keith Kirk (5)**

### **SATURDAY 13TH MARCH**

**10am to 3pm; Join the Goose Bus** - a really special day out - a bus with a guide, binoculars, telescopes and identification books to help you find and identify some of our local geese. Cost £10. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**5pm - 7pm; Gaggles of Geese Dusk walk** - free guided walk starting at Wigtown County Buildings, Wigtown DG8 9JH to celebrate sunset with the geese of Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve. **For details contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

### **SUNDAY 14TH MARCH**

**Goose Chase Day, Castle Kennedy & Gardens** - Wild Goose Chase Open Day. A fun family day out. Free entry to the gardens. **For details contact Castle Kennedy (5)**

**5.30- 7.30am; Gaggles of Geese Dawn walk** - celebrate sunrise in spectacular surroundings with the geese of Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve, with a free dawn guided walk starting at Wigtown County Buildings, Wigtown DG8 9JH. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**10 am to 3pm; Join the Goose Bus** - a really special day out - a bus with a guide, binoculars, telescopes and identification books to help you find and identify some of our local geese. Cost £10. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

### **WEDNESDAY 17TH MARCH**

**10am-12 noon; Goose Guide in the hide** - come and spend time in our hide geese spotting at Mersehead Nature Reserve, Southwick, Dumfries DG2 8AH. This event is free and the goose guide will have binoculars and a telescope for you to use and will assist in bird identification. Grid ref: NX925561. **For further information contact Keeley Spate (2)**

**5.30pm until dusk; Guide in the hide at Castle Loch** - The D&G Ranger Service provides a knowledgeable guide, wildlife identification books, binoculars and a telescope for visitors to use and to find out about what you are seeing. Meet Castle Loch Lochmaben Bird Hide (NY090811). **For further information and booking contact Ross Gemmell (7)**

**2.30pm – dusk; Goose guide in the hide at Wigtown Bay LNR** - observe thousands of geese around Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve at this free event, binoculars, telescope and identification books provided as well as the goose guide. Meet at Wigtown Harbour Bird hide NX438551. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

### **SATURDAY 20TH MARCH**

**5.30- 7.30pm; Gaggles of Geese Dusk walk** - free guided walk starting at Wigtown County Buildings, Wigtown DG8 9JH to celebrate sunset with the geese of Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve. **For details contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**10am to 3pm; Join the Goose Bus** - a really special day out - a bus with a guide, binoculars, telescopes and identification books to help you find and identify some of our local geese. Cost £10. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**10am to 1pm; Wild Goose Chase event** - looking for geese on the RSPB reserve next to Loch Ken, grid ref NX699684. Bring binoculars if you have them, and stout footwear and waterproofs. Booking essential. **For further information contact Gus Keys (8)**

### **SUNDAY 21ST MARCH**

**10am - 3pm; Wigtown Bay LNR Open Day.** **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**10am to 3pm; Join the Goose Bus** - a really special day out - a bus with a guide, binoculars, telescopes and identification books to help you find and identify some of our local geese. Cost £10, pay in advance or on the day. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

**5 am- 7.30am; Gaggles of Geese Dawn walk** - celebrate sunrise in spectacular surroundings with the geese

of Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve, with a free dawn guided walk starting at Wigtown County Buildings, Wigtown DG8 9JH. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

### **WEDNESDAY 24TH MARCH**

**10am-12 noon; Goose Guide in the hide** - come and spend time in our hide geese spotting at Mersehead Nature Reserve, Southwick, Dumfries DG2 8AH. This event is free and the goose guide will have binoculars and a telescope for you to use and will assist in bird identification. Grid ref: NX925561 **For further information contact Keeley Spate (2)**

**2.30pm – dusk; Goose guide in the hide at Wigtown Bay LNR** - observe thousands of geese around Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve at this free event, binoculars, telescope and identification books provided as well as the goose guide. Meet at Wigtown Harbour Bird hide NX438551. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

### **SATURDAY 27TH MARCH**

**10am to 3pm; Join the Goose Bus** - a really special day out - a bus with a guide, binoculars, telescopes and identification books to help you find and identify some of our local geese. Cost £10. **For more information contact Elizabeth Tindal (3)**

## **Contact Information**

- (1)NTS:  
phone 01556 503702
- (2) Keeley Spate:  
phone 01387 780579 or email keeley.spate@rspb.org.uk
- (3) Elizabeth Tindal:  
phone 01988 402401 or email elizabeth.tindal@dumgal.gov.uk
- (4) Brian Morrell:  
phone 01387 770200 or email brian.morrell@wwt.org.uk
- (5) Keith Kirk:  
phone 01556 505479 or email keith.kirk@dumgal.gov.uk
- (6) Castle Kennedy:  
phone 01776 702024 or 01581 400225 or email enquiries@castlekennedygardens.co.uk or visit [www.castlekennedygardens.co.uk](http://www.castlekennedygardens.co.uk)
- (7) Ross Gemmell:  
phone 01387 260366 or 07834 567893 or email ross.gemmell@dumgal.gov.uk
- (8) Gus Keys: phone 07747 885973 or email angus.keys@rspb.org.uk



# Dates For Your Diary

Nov 2009 – April 2010

Whilst every effort is made to check the accuracy of the information in Dates for Your Diary, Solway Firth Partnership cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies or wrong information contained here, and strongly recommend that you confirm details/arrangements beforehand.

## October

### OCTOBER 3RD TO NOVEMBER 11TH Copeland's Wildlife Photographer of the Year

Exhibition at the Beacon, Whitehaven, Cumbria.

For more information go to:

[www.thebeacon-whitehaven.co.uk](http://www.thebeacon-whitehaven.co.uk)

## November

SUNDAY 1ST NOVEMBER 10AM – 5PM

### In focus at Caerlaverock

Try before you buy all the latest binoculars and telescopes. Grade indoors. Cost free. Booking not essential. Meet Caerlaverock Wetland Centre.

For more information ring 01387 770200

MONDAY - FRIDAY 2ND - 6TH NOVEMBER  
2PM – 4PM

### Mersehead winter walk

A guided wintry walk around this captivating site. Staff and volunteers will be on hand to guide you. Grade easy. Cost free. Bring binoculars, waterproofs and sturdy footwear. Booking not essential. Meet Mersehead RSPB Nature Reserve, Southwick, Dumfries, DG2 8AH. NX925561.

For more information ring 01387 780579

WEDNESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER

### Mawbray Banks boardwalk wiring

We will be continuing to rewire the boardwalk. Knee pads will be provided (or bring your own) and gloves. Please wear suitable clothing and bring some refreshments. Meet at the car park off the B5300 at Mawbray Yard (seaward side of road in Mawbray).

For details ring AONB Unit, Silloth 016973 33055 or e-mail [graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk](mailto:graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk)

FRIDAY 6TH NOVEMBER FROM 10.30AM

### Bird survey on Mawbray Banks

Meeting at Mawbray Yard Car Park, bring binoculars and warm clothing and join in with our Solway bird survey. Learn about identifying local and over-wintering birds

and enjoy the stroll along the Banks.

For details ring AONB Unit, Silloth 016973 33055 or email [graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk](mailto:graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk)

NOVEMBER 7TH TO JANUARY 30TH 2010

### Collecting the Past

Wigtownshire played an important role in the story of Scottish Archaeology. This exhibition looks at local antiquarians and their collections. Stranraer Museum Exhibitions, 55 George Street, Stranraer. Admission free.

For more information ring 01776 705088

MONDAY 9TH NOVEMBER FROM 10.30AM

### Crosscanonby Carr Reserve Workday

Routine maintenance of footpaths, boardwalks and woodland areas as part of reserve management. Please meet on site or on the beach front car park on the B5300. All tools will be provided. Bring a packed lunch and suitable clothing.

For details ring AONB Unit, Silloth 016973 33055, or email [graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk](mailto:graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk)

FRIDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 10AM

### Guided Bird walk along Grune Point

Join in with this guided walk. There will be a good chance to see a lot of birdlife – weather permitting. Please wear suitable clothing, footwear and bring binoculars. Meet at the Discovery Centre, Silloth.

For details ring AONB Unit, Silloth 016973 33055, or email [graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk](mailto:graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk)

SUNDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 6.30AM - 9.00AM

### Dawn Flight

Watch wild geese fly in at dawn to feed on the reserve. Coffee shop will open early to serve hot drinks and bacon rolls. Grade easy. Cost – normal admission rates for WWT. Bring warm outdoor clothing and wellies, and binoculars if you have them. Meet at WWT Caerlaverock Wetland Centre, Eastpark Farm, Caerlaverock, Dumfriesshire, DG1 4RS. Booking essential.

For details and to book ring 01387 770200

SUNDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 3.30PM - 5.00PM

### Evening Flight at Caerlaverock

Join NNR staff at dusk to watch thousands of geese and ducks leaving their roosting and feeding grounds on the vast mudflats and nearby farmland. Grade easy, cost free. Bring wellies and binoculars. Meet Hollands Car park NY042659. Booking essential.

For further information and to book ring 01387 770275

TUESDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 7.30PM

### Beauty and Beast

An illustrated talk on behalf of the RSPB Volunteer Group by D&G Ranger Keith Kirk. Castle Douglas High School, Dunmuir Road, Castle Douglas. Cost: group members £1, non-members £2, under 18s free.

For more information ring 01644 420605

### WEDNESDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 10.30 AM Mawbray Banks – Pond liner installation

Come and help to install a new pond liner in the Natterjack toad pond at Mawbray Banks. Restoration is desperately needed, the more people helping the better. Meet at Mawbray Yard Car Park. All tools supplied but please bring a packed lunch and suitable warm clothes.

For details ring AONB Unit, Silloth 016973 33013, or email [graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk](mailto:graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk)



© Countryside Agency Photo by Charlie Heldey

### FRIDAY NOVEMBER 20TH Solway Firth Partnership Conference 2009

The Partnership's Annual Conference and AGM will be held at the Easterbrook Hall, the Crichton, Dumfries this year, and features Eric Robson as our keynote Speaker, plus presentations and displays about a wide range of Solway-themed issues. Free of charge but booking essential.

For more information see our web site [www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk](http://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk), or write to, or phone, the Partnership at the address on the back of Tidelines.

WEDNESDAY 25TH NOVEMBER  
10 AM - 12 PM

### Ken Dee Marshes guided walk (RSPB)

Lookout for Greenland white-fronted geese next to Loch Ken. We also hope to see greylags, pink-footed geese and a wealth of wildfowl and waders. Grade easy. Cost free. Bring binoculars if you have them and stout footwear and waterproofs. Meet at Ken Dee Marshes nature reserve, near Crossmichael, Castle Douglas, at the car park NX699684. Booking essential.

For details and to book telephone Angus Keys or Neil Groves 01671 404975

### FRIDAY 27TH NOVEMBER 10.30 AM 'Adopt a Beach' litter pick at Allonby

The good work continues with the Marine Conservation Society's 'Adopt a Beach' litter pick. Volunteers to meet at the car park opposite Twentyman's shop, Allonby on B5300. All tools and gloves will be provided,



please wear  
suitable clothing (approx. 2 hours)  
**For details ring AONB Unit, Silloth 016973  
33013 or email [graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk](mailto:graeme.proud@allerdale.gov.uk)**

## December

**SATURDAY 5TH DECEMBER - SATURDAY  
30TH JANUARY 2010**

### **Presents From The Past 2009**

An exhibition which highlights all the donation received by the Stewartry museum over the years. Free admission. The Stewartry Museum, St. Mary Street Kirkcudbright

**For more information contact David Devereux, tel. 01557 331643**

**SATURDAY 5TH DECEMBER 10.30 AM - 2 PM**

### **Tree planting and hedgerow work**

As part of National Tree Week the Mersehead team are looking for volunteers to help plant more native trees and hedgerows. Can you help? Grade tasks. Cost free. Bring waterproofs and sturdy footwear. Booking not essential. Meet Mersehead Nature Reserve, Southwick, Dumfries, DG2 8AH. NX925561.

**For further information ring 01387 780579**

**TUESDAY 8TH DECEMBER 7.30PM**

### **Art Safari**

An illustrated talk by local artist John Threlfall, followed by festive food on behalf of RSPB Local Volunteer Group. Castle Douglas High School, Dunmuir Road, Castle Douglas. Cost: group members £1, non-members £2, under 18s free.

**More information ring 01644 420605**



**SUNDAY 13TH DECEMBER 7AM - 9AM**

### **Dawn Flight at Caerlaverock**

Watch wild geese in fly in at dawn to feed on the reserve. The coffee shop will open early to serve hot drinks and bacon rolls. Grade easy. Cost normal admission rates. Bring warm outdoor clothing and wellies, binoculars if you have them. Meet WWT Caerlaverock Wetland Centre, Eastpark Farm, Caerlaverock, Dumfriesshire, DG1 4RS. Booking essential.

**For details and to book ring 01387 770200**

**SUNDAY 13TH DECEMBER 11AM - 2PM**

### **Winter Nature Trail at Caerlaverock**

Take a break from the hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping and visit our nature trail. Simply follow the trail on the nature reserve and answer the questions as you go. Grade fair. Cost free. Bring wellies. Booking not essential. Meet Hollands car park NY042659.

**For details ring Nick Gedge on 01387 770275**



© Cotton Grass © AONB

**SUNDAY 13TH DECEMBER 3.30PM - DUSK  
Castle Loch Goose Survey**

Come to see why the Castle Loch is so important for geese. See how the ranger surveys the geese which roost on the Loch over winter and the importance of this information on a national scale. Grade easy. Cost free. Bring boots/willies Booking not essential. Meet at Lochmaben Castle Car park NY088812.

**For details ring Ross Gemmell on 07834567893**

**THURSDAY DEC 31ST 2009 1:30AM - 3:30AM**

### **Hogmanay Walk Forests of the Solway Coast**

See out the year on a leisurely Forestry Commission guided walk with friends and family. No booking required. Free. Meet: Town Wood Car Park, Dalbeattie. GridRef: NX836599

**For details ring 0845 3673787**

## January 2010

**SUNDAY 3RD JANUARY 9:30AM - 3:00PM**

### **Wildfowl and Waders**

Join Cumbria Wildlife Trust on this day visit to the old railway viaduct, the RSPB Nature Reserve at North Plain Farm and various other points towards Anthorn and Moricambe Bay. There is a high tide around midday which we hope will bring the waders near. We should be joined by a RSPB warden who will be able to answer questions. Organised by the North Cumbria Local Support Group. Meet at Brampton Showfield car park at 8.45am if you would like to share cars. There is a suggested donation of £2 payable on the day. Children over 10 years old are welcome to attend. No dogs allowed. Please bring suitable outdoor clothing and a packed lunch. Walk distance 2 miles

**WEDNESDAY 13TH JANUARY 7.30PM**

### **Passerines of the Solway**

A talk by Dave Blackledge on behalf of RSPB Local Volunteer Group. in the Tithe Barn, West Walls, Carlisle commencing at 7.30pm. Free for members, £1 for non-members.

**For more information ring 01228 561684, email [bob@onethirty.force9.co.uk](mailto:bob@onethirty.force9.co.uk)**

## March

**March 2010**

Dumfries and Galloway's Wild Goose Chase Enjoy this wonderful geese spectacle through a series of goose related events, guided walks and talks. For more information see our feature on pages 16-17.

For more information on travel, accommodation or events please contact Elaine McClymont 07827848785 or email: [elaine.mcclymont@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.mcclymont@dumgal.gov.uk)

**Saturday 6th March 2010**

### **Environment Fair 2010**

Learn about the environment in an interactive, fun way through storytelling and craft making at DG One Leisure Centre, Dumfries.

**See local press for details nearer the date.**

## April

**FRIDAY 2ND TO SUNDAY 18TH APRIL 2010**

Dumfries and Galloway Wildlife Festival 2010

The seventh Dumfries and Galloway Wildlife Festival, with new activities plus favourite events such as badger watching at WWT Caerlaverock and visiting the Galloway Red Kite feeding station.

**See local press for details nearer the date.**

*Solway Firth*  
  
*Partnership*

### **Disclaimer**

Tidelines is the newsletter of the Solway Firth Partnership. Although all due care is taken regarding the information published in Tidelines, Solway Firth Partnership cannot be held responsible for any errors or inaccuracies contained in Tidelines. Tidelines may include links to websites for information, but Solway Firth Partnership has no responsibility for the content of these links. Please note that the views and opinions expressed in Tidelines are not necessarily those of the Solway Firth Partnership.





**Back cover Photo:**

A seashore safari by Susannah Bleakley Keen photographer  
Susannah took this photo of children exploring the Cumbrian coast on a beautiful day.

**For further information, to submit an article or to join the SFP mailing list, please contact**

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