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networkbulletin

AUTUMN 2023

FOR TCV SCOTLAND'S COMMUNITY NETWORK



In this issue: **wildflowers and meadows – DIY!**

Contents [click to navigate](#)

Minister visits Glasgow project	3
Creating your own wildflower meadow: a step-by-step guide	5
Capital care	8
Path fixers	10
Nature Notes	11
Growing Identiplant in Scotland!	12
Taking a closer look	14
A tern for the better	15
Tullibody Community Garden Q&A... 18	
Udny Paths Group in Aberdeenshire	21
Scotland The Bread – Soil to Slice.....	23
Next time	26
Free membership	26

Front cover: Give our wildflowers and grassy meadows a helping hand, from sowing your own seeds, like three year old Sylvan in Fintry, to managing our meadow areas, like 89 year old Pat in Edinburgh.

PHOTOS: JOSH THORNHILL AND JOE WILLIAMS

Welcome to the Autumn Network Bulletin highlighting the work of The Conservation Volunteers in Scotland, and of community groups and organisations belonging to TCV's Community Network. The Network's membership in Scotland recently topped 300 and comprises an amazing variety of Friends groups, nature and amenity societies, schools, community woodlands and gardens, and others – all caring for their local greenspaces and wildlife habitats. Membership and joining details are available on our [website](#)

In recent weeks TCV volunteers and community groups have been cutting meadow areas, after wildflowers have set their seed. In this issue, we look at the value of wildflower areas and meadows, how to create them and how to look after them. Tullibody Community Garden in Clackmannanshire is one group who have benefitted from a colourful show of wildflowers.

Also in this issue: Lorna Slater, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, visited a TCV project in Glasgow to see how our volunteers were enriching an area for biodiversity and making it more accessible for local people.

The Soil to Slice project encourages community organisations to grow traditional wheat varieties, and there are benefits for biodiversity too.

Lesley Sweeney of Falkirk Council outlines a novel approach to attracting Common Terns, by installing nesting rafts on the Bothkennar lagoons. A few miles from Bothkennar, TCV volunteers have been enhancing a path in Muiravonside Country Park, and improving local access is also the aim of Udny Paths Group, some 100 miles to the north in Aberdeenshire.

Autumn's Nature Notes highlights that hedgehogs will soon be hibernating. Can you give them a helping hand? And, NatureScot has some seasonal tips for everyone to Make Space For Nature.

LATEST NEWS: TCV has recently partnered with the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) to launch Identiplant in Scotland, to improve the plant identification skills of keen enthusiasts. Enrolment for the 2024 course opens in December. See page 12.



Lorna Slater removing plastic tree guard with Paul Archibald, Volunteer Officer.



Volunteers clearing rhododendron.

PHOTOS: JOSH THORNHILL



Lorna Slater, Scottish Government Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, recently visited TCV in Glasgow to understand more about people's connection to nature and the biodiversity crisis. Ms Slater visited one of our sites at Maryhill where she met with the volunteers who enrich the area's biodiversity and make it accessible for local people. It was a decidedly dreich day but that didn't dampen the spirits of the Minister or the TCV team.

Our project at Dawsholm Park and the River Kelvin Walkway provides an opportunity for people to experience hands-on connection to nature and to come together to make a difference to their green spaces. By completing tasks such as removing invasive species such as rhododendron, and clearing paths so they are safe for the public, TCV volunteers enable local people's access to and enjoyment of an important green space in Glasgow. This in turn assists their

connection to nature and raising awareness of biodiversity loss. This is particularly important in urban communities such as Maryhill, which Ms Slater saw first-hand during her visit. Community volunteers are essential to the achievement of the [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Plan's](#) ambitions for urban nature, as a sense of ownership of local and national nature reserves encourages communities to protect them.

TCV's community engagement and volunteering projects in green spaces results in multiple outcomes. Volunteers



Braving the Glasgow weather, from left to right: Keith Connal, TCV Trustee; Debbie Adams, Acting TCV Chief Executive Officer; Craig Young, TCV Senior Project Officer; Lorna Slater, Minister; Fiona McGrevey, TCV Operations Leader.

see an improvement in their physical and mental health and wellbeing and develop their skills alongside the environment and community gains. Volunteering is an important contribution to [Scottish Government's agendas](#) for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; health; education and skills.

Lorna Slater, Minister, said: *"It was inspiring to meet the volunteers and staff from The Conservation Volunteers at Dawsholm Park and hear about the work they are doing to remove invasive non-native species from the park and Kelvin Walkway. This dedicated and enthusiastic group has made a real difference to improve the area not only for local wildlife but also for people's use and enjoyment."*

"Community actions such as these in green spaces across Scotland will be critical if we are to reach our ambitious targets to halt the loss of nature by 2030 and restore it by 2045. I would encourage anyone who is interested in making a real difference to their area by helping to restore nature to visit TCV's website and become a volunteer."

Work on key sites in Glasgow has been made possible by our partnership with Glasgow City Council and NatureScot.

Debbie Adams, TCV Acting Chief Executive Officer said:

"I was delighted we could show the Minister the important role that volunteers play in improving green spaces for people and for biodiversity. Last year our regular TCV volunteers gave over 17,000 days of their time to projects in Scotland making positive contributions for nature and to their own lives. It was great that the Minister was able to see that effort first-hand and hearing her thank our hard-working volunteers for their work was really appreciated."

"In a time of scarce resources, the value of multiple outcomes gained from these activities cannot be underestimated. These projects generate positive health outcomes, on physical and mental health, community benefits as well as much-needed outcomes for the environment and biodiversity. It is a really effective use of resources."

If you'd like to join the team and volunteer in Glasgow, [find a volunteering session here](#).

Creating your own wildflower meadow: a step-by-step guide

By **Camilo Brokaw**, Senior Project Officer.



One of the most dramatic statistics in UK nature conservation is that we have lost over 97% of our wildflower meadows since the 1930s, mainly due to changing farming methods and urban expansion. A meadow is a rich mix of native wildflowers and grasses, which were traditionally allowed to flower before a hay cut in the summer, followed by grazing from livestock.



Wildflower meadows are not only visually stunning, but they also support a plethora of wildlife, including small mammals, birds, and pollinating insects like bees and butterflies. We can help reverse the loss of this valuable habitat by creating new wildflower areas and meadows. However, establishing a wildflower meadow requires a thoughtful approach. Here's a beginners guide to help you on this beautiful journey.

1. Observation is key

Before jumping into creating a meadow, take time to observe the current state of your site. Assess:

- The species present: a diverse range

of species can indicate a healthy ecosystem.

- The health of the grass: dense, vigorous grass might hint at a nutrient-rich soil. Wildflowers prefer nutrient-*poor* soil.
- Drainage conditions: puddles or waterlogged areas might need bog plants if drainage can't be improved.
- Soil pH: certain plants prefer acidic or alkaline soils. Look for the presence of several indicator species such as buttercup, sorrel, and docks (acidic) or chamomile, sow thistle, and chickweed (alkaline). Alternatively, use a simple pH test kit to assess your soil.

2. Assessing the right location

The observations above can guide you in determining if the location is suitable for a meadow and which seeds would thrive best.

3. Preparing the ground

Depending on the health and vigour of the existing grass, you may need to:

- Reduce soil nutrients to limit competition from grasses. One way is by removing the top layer of soil. Lifting the turf will also reduce the competition of well-established grass.
- Scarify the soil, which means scratching the surface, to make it more receptive to seeds. When the ground does not have anything growing very vigorously it may be low in fertility as it is and only needs exposed soil in order to sow seed.

Please note that while chemical controls can be tempting to manage unwanted species, they can negatively impact the vital fungal partners in the soil.

4. Seed selection and sowing

Till the soil with a rake until you achieve a fine soil particle size optimal for seed germination. When to sow? Both autumn and spring have their merits.

Autumn sowing: seeds benefit from the natural stratification process during winter, leading to better germination in spring.

Spring sowing: the ground is not left bare for as long and seeds that don't need cold temperatures will be quick to get started.

Choose a seed mix with a good variety of species, such as a meadow mix from **Scotia Seeds** (typically 20% wildflowers, 80% grasses) unless you have ascertained you have more specific conditions you can select seeds for.

It's important to know the life cycle of the wildflowers and grasses you are sowing:

- Annual plants germinate, flower, set seed and die in one year.
- Biennial plants germinate and grow one year, and flower and die in year two.
- Perennial plants flower and 'die back' each year, but grow back again in following years.

Whilst some meadow seed mixes include some annual wildflowers to give an early burst of colour eg corncockle and cornflower, most meadow mixes are of perennial species, so you aren't effectively starting from scratch each year.

When spreading seeds, a useful tip is to mix your seeds with dry sand or sawdust, so you can see where your seeds are landing to ensure an even spread. Gently walk over the area so the seeds have good contact with the soil, and water lightly.



Here, we've considered the use of wildflower seeds, but in some situations wildflower 'plugs' may also be suitable, as explained by **Plantlife**

5. Maintenance in the first year

To ensure your newly sown wildflowers aren't overshadowed by competing species, cut the meadow three times during the first year. This will give your wildflowers the best chance to establish. Cut to about 5cm off the ground. You can use a mower or strimmer, but many conservation groups prefer manual scything as it's less likely to harm any wildlife. In this and subsequent years, leave the cuttings for about a week which will allow the seeds to fall off. You then need to rake up and remove the cuttings, called arisings, as leaving them will add unwanted nutrients to the soil. Cutting and removing the clippings mimics the hay cutting and grazing cycles of traditional meadows.



Scything meadow in Pilrig Park, Edinburgh
JOE WILLIAMS

6. Ongoing care

From the second year onwards, an annual cut should suffice in August or September when most plants have set seed. Continuously observe the species in your meadow. Hand-weeding invasive species and adding more seeds can enhance diversity. It's important to avoid one species becoming dominant.

Meadow creation and management is one of the activities carried out by TCV's Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Team – see page 8.

Community learning

I recently had the pleasure of delivering meadow ecology workshops in Renfrewshire for the Inchinnan Development Trust, Jenny's Well volunteers in Paisley, and Bee Happy Houston. I'm excited to be running more free meadow ecology and creation workshops in Glasgow this autumn, so keep an eye on our social media and [Eventbrite](#)

"We were so pleased with the turnout and had some really great feedback from those who attended – everyone's feeling ready to get started with some more ground prep and sowing this autumn!"
– Inchinnan Development Trust



Workshop volunteers from Bee Happy Houston tilling soil prior to sowing seeds.
CAMILO BROKAW

Creating a wildflower meadow is a journey, one that is rewarding not just for us, but for the environment and the species that call it home. Happy gardening!

To learn more about meadow creation and management, there are plenty of sources available, such as:

[Plantlife's The Good Meadow Guide](#)
[TCV's Urban Handbook](#)

TCV's ten comprehensive [Conservation Handbooks](#) cover the main aspects of habitat and greenspace management and are available through online subscriptions, with discounts for Community Network members.

Capital care

By **Joe Williams**, Senior Project Officer.

Our Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Team have recently been working in partnership with the Thriving Green Spaces project (below) to scythe and lift the resulting plant material off wildflower areas in some of the city's popular parks. The aim is to maintain nutrient levels, and the cuttings are either used as mulch around newly planted trees or hedgerows, or taken away

to compost down. We're utilising different techniques to create or restore wildflower meadows that may have viable seeds already present, either by preparing the soil for further sowing or to encourage new growth. If you would like to join us, future Edinburgh volunteer events will be listed on [Eventbrite](#).

The Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Team at Pilrig Park. JOE WILLIAMS





Volunteers scything meadow area in Leith Links. JOE WILLIAMS



By **Alex Hunter**, Greenspace Development Officer, City of Edinburgh Council.

The City of Edinburgh Council is the lead partner of the **Thriving Green Spaces Project** partnership made up of six organisations. The project team sit within the Council's Parks and Greenspace staff group in Neighbourhood Environmental Services and are part of the multi-disciplinary group who care for and develop all Council owned greenspaces.

Thriving Green Spaces is funded by Future Parks Accelerator grants and a core focus is on the delivery of the Edinburgh Nature Network which was developed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and the University of Edinburgh. The Nature Network identifies over 200 city-wide actions under the themes of Create, Connect, Enhance, Protect and Restore to address the

declared climate and nature emergencies by supporting ecosystem services and biodiversity.

By investing in natural solutions to climate and biodiversity loss, the project will have positive impacts on the environment, economy and society, making the city resilient and thriving. As the capital city of Scotland, Edinburgh can demonstrate on the global stage how to build a thriving urban environment where people live as a part of nature, and experience the multiple benefits of doing so.

Can TCV help your group?

As highlighted above, TCV's Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Team help deliver practical meadow creation and management activities. We also actively engage local community groups and deliver training in meadow management through Wildflower Identification courses and Scything workshops, enabling them to manage these sites moving forwards. We're looking to work with more groups across the city as part of the Edinburgh Nature Network. If anyone is interested in joining us, or would like to discuss biodiversity enhancement in their local greenspaces, please contact **Joe Williams, Senior Project Officer**



Path fixers



In September, our Forth Valley Biodiversity Action Team completed a path maintenance project at Muiravonside Country Park, as **Ed Wood**, Senior Project Officer, explains:

Muiravonside is Falkirk's only country park with 170 acres of woodland and parkland, mini demonstration farm, sculpture trail and children's play area. It's a popular destination for outdoor lovers and families. We worked with Falkirk Council's Greenspace Team to improve access to the park's woodland for walkers and cyclists, encouraging visitors to stick to the path and in turn rewild the areas where desire

lines have unnecessarily spread into the woodland. Desire lines develop over time when people repeatedly take short cuts through an area.

Our aim was to reduce waterlogging of the existing path by skirting the edges with timber and replacing the clay soil with aggregate to provide better drainage and create better footing for path users. A passing cyclist commented that he had left his bike via the handlebars at this very location due to the thick, wet mud, so was delighted to see the issue has been addressed. He was also thankful for the drainage culverts we installed over the summer, commenting that the path is much more stable and safer to ride on since these works took place. It's great to have such positive feedback for our efforts.

The team really had to work together to achieve the desired outcome in the allotted timescale and completed the project with enough time to give our van a well-deserved good going over! Massive thanks to the volunteers. I'm very proud to work with such a dedicated team of conservationists!

Contact **Ed Wood** if you would like to join his volunteer team.

Nature Notes



Juvenile hedgehog. ROB BOWKER



A hedgehog home. STEVE KIDGELL

Hedgehogs snuggle-up

As autumn rolls on, hedgehogs are building up their fat reserves in preparation for winter when their regular food sources such as beetles, earthworms and slugs are scarce. Most hedgehogs will hibernate from around November through to March or April.

Despite what some believe, hibernating hedgehogs don't go completely to sleep over the winter. Instead, they go into a state of torpor where their body temperature cools down to match their surroundings, so saving energy. They will occasionally wake up to forage for food. And some hedgehogs may not hibernate at all, especially during a mild winter.

Hibernating hedgehogs build a sheltered nest called a hibernacula from leaves, grass, and other materials, which provide high levels of insulation. These nests are often located under hedges, compost heaps, log piles, sheds etc.

Provide a hedgehog home

You can give our hedgehogs a helping hand by providing a ready-made hedgehog home in a suitable location

such as a quiet corner of the garden. Hedgehog boxes can be bought from the RSPB, British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) and garden centres, or you can construct one yourself with some timber off-cuts. There are plenty of simple instructions available online eg from the [BHPS](#). An important tip is *don't* treat the wood with creosote or any non water-based preservatives or paint, as the fumes can be long-lasting and harmful.

More fascinating facts about hedgehog hibernation are available from [Hedgehog Street](#)

What else can I do?

Hedgehog numbers in rural areas have been declining steeply for over 20 years. Possible reasons for this decline include loss of hedgerows, lack of connected habitats, and less food such as invertebrates due to intensified agriculture. The better news is that urban hedgehog numbers seem to be holding up. And our [HogWatch Scotland](#) Citizen Science project has a number of ideas for individuals, community groups and schools to help our hedgehogs.



By **Dr Chantal Helm**, BSBI Training Co-ordinator.

TCV has teamed up with the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) to develop a new hub which aims to deliver and expand the Identiplant course in Scotland. Created to take near-beginners to an intermediate level, Identiplant is for people who want to get started with serious botany. This may include TCV volunteers, members of groups belonging to TCV's Community Network, or those

working for an environmental organisation.

Identiplant is therefore intended for people who already have some knowledge of plants and are ready to advance from identification by matching pictures and remembering names to a more systematic approach, using scientific names, written descriptions, and keys – tools used to identify plants based on their characteristics.

The course is very popular across England



where it was oversubscribed in 2023, but is relatively unknown in Scotland until now. Our hope is that the TCV Identiplant hub will provide a new pathway in Scotland that helps develop beginner plant enthusiasts towards becoming skilled botanists, able to make valuable contributions to the field.

Identiplant is a totally unique online course, taking a structured plant family approach, and students are supported in completing the course by a personal tutor. There are 15 units, each covering a particular topic with detailed content that builds the knowledge of the students allowing them to eventually be able to make accurate plant identifications. From unit four onwards most of the individual modules cover specific plant families which are common in the UK. Students are tasked with hunting for specific widespread plants on a 'wanted list' in their local area throughout the season and will complete question sheets associated with each unit in order to demonstrate their understanding of the material. These are sent back to their personal course tutor, who will provide feedback. About three hours per week should be sufficient to study the units and write up the answers, and additional time is required to go out and find the plants.

The only equipment required is *The Wild Flower Key* by Francis Rose and a x10 hand lens.

Students who complete the question sheets are awarded a Certificate of Completion. The course is not accredited but is accepted as Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The most important outcomes will be recognition by other botanists and the knowledge and confidence to progress, either independently or with a group, to higher levels of competence in plant identification.

The course fees are £300. Students accepted onto Identiplant may find that they are eligible for grants and support from a number of organisations towards the cost of undertaking the course, including the BSBI's Training Grant. For those undertaking Identiplant as part of CPD, their employer may be willing to cover all or some of the course fees.

Further Identiplant details, including sample course units, are available on the [website](#) through which course applications will be made. Enrolment for Identiplant 2024 opens on 1 December, and the course itself begins in February 2024.



Alex Paterson, top right, with the survey team at Ruchill Park.



Taking a closer look

As part of our autumn-based meadow activities, **Alex Paterson**, our Citizen Science Officer, has been running several Wildflower & Pollinator ID sessions. Each session allows participants to become a Citizen Scientist by taking part in a wildflower and invertebrate survey on an established wildflower meadow. The session increases participants' understanding of what Citizen Science is and why it's important, it improves their species identification skills, and it's a chance to get out and connect with nature!

One of the surveys was held at the wildlife area in Ruchill Park, Maryhill, in the north-west of Glasgow. Despite being on-site for only two hours, the team identified 11 wildflower and plant species as well as 14 invertebrate species.

Alex's sessions are part of the wider Scotland Counts project which aims to ensure that every individual and community in Scotland has the opportunity to develop the skills and confidence to understand their local environment through Citizen Science. Citizen Science is vital as it allows us to

more deeply understand the natural world around us. Nearly 90% of all species and habitat records collected in the UK come from Citizen Scientists, so by getting involved you can really make a difference.

Over the coming months Alex will be running further free Citizen Science sessions across the Central Belt on a range of subjects – keep an eye out for them on [Eventbrite](#). And there are plenty of Citizen Science resources, activities and surveys for all ages, interests and abilities, which you can discover for yourself on our [website](#)



*One of the survey finds – an Angle Shades moth, *Phlogophora meticulosa*.*

A tern for the better



Common Tern. ALEXIS LOURS

The Common Tern is a welcome summer visitor to Britain, and efforts are being made to increase their numbers beside the Firth of Forth, as explained by **Lesley Sweeney**, Falkirk Council Access Ranger:

Common Terns are fascinating birds to watch as they hover before they dive for fish. They visit our shores during the summer months to breed, usually arriving at the beginning of May from warmer climates such as West and South Africa.



Nesting rafts anchored in position.

LESLEY SWEENEY



Tern eggs on bed of cockles.

LESLEY SWEENEY

Their long tails have earned them the nickname 'sea-swallow'.

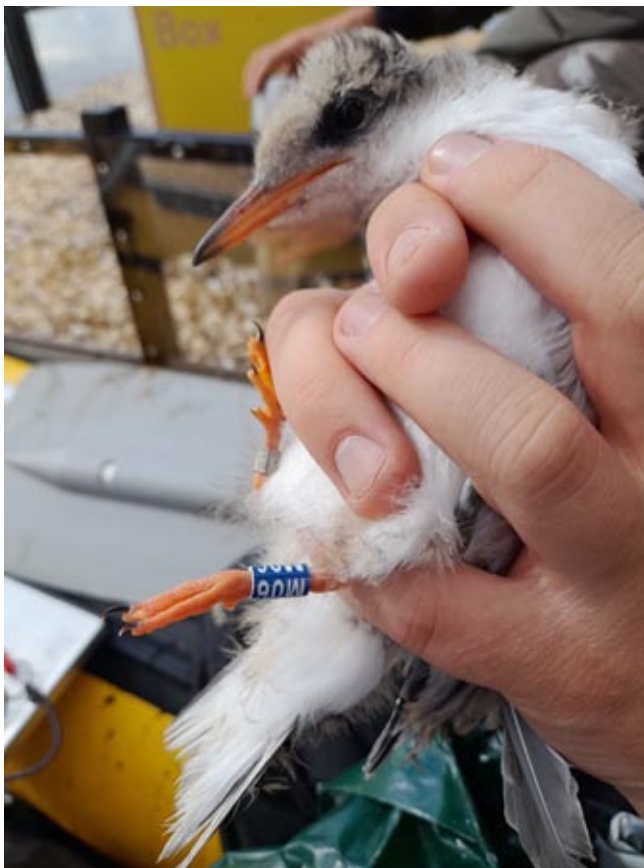
During the breeding season they are very noisy, breeding in colonies to help protect their chicks. The female generally lays between 1-3 eggs in a clutch, and being ground-nesting birds they are vulnerable to predation and extremes of weather. In Scotland, most Common Terns nest on or near the coast, whereas in other parts of Britain they tend to nest well inland.

Bothkennar lagoons are located within a Site of Special Scientific Interest, an

important habitat for the flora or fauna, and forms part of the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area, designated specifically to protect rare or vulnerable breeding birds. The lagoons formed due to subsidence caused by past undermining of the land. In 2015 a successful application was granted to Falkirk Council from Inner Forth Landscape Initiative to install two tern rafts on the larger pond at Bothkennar. These were assembled and installed by TCV staff and trainees.

The rafts were monitored for any activity but unfortunately they were initially unsuccessful. In 2021, Falkirk Council Ranger Service in partnership with the RSPB and Falkirk Wildlife Volunteers Group was given a further small grant to bring the rafts onshore, strip them down and rebuild them. It was decided to bolt the rafts together creating one larger raft and add the predator control sheets along all four sides of the raft. Once completed the raft was taken back out onto the lagoon in March 2021.

To our surprise, at least one breeding pair raised at least one chick on the raft. Exciting times indeed. Falkirk Council received more funding, this time from the Nature Restoration Fund (NRF), to



Ringed Tern chick. LESLEY SWEENEY

purchase and install three more rafts in 2022.

Green Future Building supplied the rafts, and also built them on site. The main body of the raft is made from recycled plastic and the cockle shells, on which the Terns nest, were a by-product from the cockle industry. Since the rafts are primarily made of recycled plastic, they require very little maintenance.

It took a full day to build and float out the rafts. This was done using a Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) kindly donated by Angus Duncan, Falkirk Council Outdoor Access Team Leader, and a 3hp electric outboard motor purchased with NRF money.

Local bird watchers contacted us to say they estimated 30 breeding pairs were spread between the four rafts.

In 2023 another successful application was granted for another two more rafts to be installed at the same location giving a total of six rafts, and to our amazement forty-five breeding pairs were recorded on the rafts.

In partnership with Clyde Ringing Group led by Dr Iain Livingstone, and myself from Falkirk Council Ranger Service,

the breeding site was visited in July to colour and metal ring as many chicks as possible. Forty-nine chicks were ringed with about twenty others being too young to ring. Coloured rings help to record the movement of migratory waders more easily as they can be monitored and recorded using binoculars. All colour ringing projects are approved by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and each number is unique to each individual bird.

Once the breeding season was over we visited the rafts in August to check all the chicks had fledged and we'll make a final check on the rafts next year before the birds come back.

Visiting

Bothkennar lagoons and surrounding area is worth a visit at any time of the year, as we have many summer visitors and similarly in the winter months, migrants appear from the north. Please note there is no formal parking available which can only be done at the field gates, and we ask that access be kept clear for farmers. The paths are mainly farm tracks, uneven in places and the woodland paths have kissing gates in places.



Tullibody Community Garden Q&A

TCV has been pleased to give a helping hand to Tullibody Community Garden in Clackmannanshire. Here, the Garden team describe what they do and how to get involved.

Who are we?

We're a small, friendly organisation entirely run by enthusiastic volunteers from all walks of life. We started life as part of Tullibody Health Living Initiative back in 2014, and since 2018 we've been set up in our own right.

What are we about?

Gardening for health and wellbeing – of people and the planet – about sums it up!

What do we get up to?

- We grow fruit, vegetables and flowers. And we get local nursery and other schools growing too.
- Sell produce at affordable prices.
- Promote cooking of fresh, healthy dishes.
- Run public events, growing courses, cooking courses.
- Link up with other local groups eg nursery schools, Tullibody Family Centre, TCV's Green Gym.
- Develop the Garden to encourage wildlife.

Are we open to the public?

Yes! We have set days/times when we are open (see Facebook for current times). Everyone is really welcome – to wander around the Garden, enjoy a picnic or a cuppa, or to quietly sit and relax.

Where are we?

In Carseview, Tullibody, FK10 2SR, off Newmills.

How can people get involved?

Pop in when we're open, or come along to our events.

Volunteering – whether gardening (no experience needed); meeting and greeting visitors; harvesting fruit and veg; cooking/ providing refreshments for volunteers; admin stuff – a whole list of different opportunities!

Wildflower areas

A 2023 development we're delighted with is our new wildflower areas – planted to attract vital bees, butterflies



A bumper-sized bee and a butterfly were some of the first to visit our wildflower area!



TCV's Green Gym volunteers lend a hand. CLARE JOHNSTONE

and other pollinators to the Garden. As a 100% volunteer-run charity, we work in partnership with others. The Clacks Council Unpaid Work Squad helped lift the grass turf, and 'On the Verge', another local, voluntary organisation, provided invaluable advice and wildflower seed. Mandy from On the Verge said: *"The volunteers have done a great job – and the areas look fantastic! Like so many insects, bee numbers are declining and need our help. Sowing wildflower areas has proved to increase their numbers. We can provide help to community groups – but even creating a small area in your garden can make a difference."*

Keep up with the garden on [Facebook](#)

TCV's local Green Gym volunteers are regular visitors to the Garden, says **Clare Johnstone**, Senior Project Officer: *"We often provide extra pairs of hands at crucial times in the horticultural year such as spring and autumn and this year we've been supporting the Garden to develop their wildlife area too. It's a fantastic resource and our volunteers love the friendly, welcoming atmosphere whenever we arrive. Since spring of this year, it's been great to run our Green Gym sessions there once a month. Not only do the volunteers gain the benefit of being outdoors for their*

In the mix

The wildflower seed mix provided by On the Verge for Tullibody Community Garden comprised of, in percentages:

Annuals

Cornflower, <i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	10%
Corn Marigold, <i>Glebionis segetum</i>	6%
Corn Poppy, <i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	5%
Mayweed, <i>Triplospermum inodorum</i>	5%

Biennials

Forget me Not, <i>Myosotis arvensis</i>	1%
Foxglove, <i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	8%
Vipers Bugloss, <i>Echium vulgare</i>	5%

Perennials

Yarrow, <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	2%
Clustered Bellflower, <i>Campanula glomerata</i> ...	1%
Common Knapweed, <i>Centaurea nigra</i>	8%
Meadow Cranesbill <i>Geranium pratense</i>	8%
Field Scabious, <i>Knautia arvensis</i>	2%
White Deadnettle, <i>Lamium album</i>	1%
Meadow Vetchling, <i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	4%
Ox Eye Daisy, <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	5%
Birdsfoot Trefoil, <i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	2%
Selfheal, <i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	2%
Yellow Rattle, <i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	3%
Red Campion, <i>Silene dioica</i>	5%
Ragged Robin, <i>Silene flos-cuculi</i>	0.5%
White Campion, <i>Silene latifolia</i>	2%
Hedge Woundwort, <i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	2.5%
Devil's Bit Scabious, <i>Succisa pratensis</i>	3.5%
Red Clover, <i>Trifolium pratense</i>	2%
White Clover, <i>Trifolium repens</i>	2%
Bush Vetch, <i>Vicia sepium</i>	5%

NB. A wildflower meadow seed mix will typically include more grasses such as varieties of Bent and Fescue.

physical and mental wellbeing, it's lovely to see how gardening organically really supports pollinators and biodiversity, and we're always encouraged to sample some of the produce too!"

For information on the Green Gym, please contact clare.johnstone@tcv.org.uk or 07818 511 658.



On the Verge is a Stirling based, voluntary, community project established in 2010. It works with community groups in and around

Stirling and Clackmananshire to establish and develop areas of native wildflowers. For more details, check out On the Verge on [Facebook](#) and their [website](#)



Some of the Garden's volunteers.

Udny Paths Group in Aberdeenshire

By **Steve Baguley**, Chair of Udny Paths Group.

We're fortunate to get mechanical help from Bob and his Kubota from the Pitmedden-Udny-Tarves Community Co-operative. Upgrading a section of the Hill of Udny path.

PHOTOS: STEVE BAGULEY



The route of our next big project – a 900m path along an old track which is now more of a gorse-obscured desire line.

Is this a route or is it a path? I've lived half my life in Scotland and half in England. Moving back north 20 years ago made me think about the different relationship people have with paths in the two countries. In England there are lots of paths through the countryside and these are usually well marked – both on the ground and on maps. However, the catch is that you generally aren't allowed to go anywhere else. In Scotland you can wander pretty much wherever you want, which is

of course great.* However, the catch is that very few of the best routes are marked – either on the ground or on maps. This is definitely off-putting to new residents and visitors to an area. Am I allowed to go here? Does it lead anywhere? Will it be OK with my buggy/wheelchair/bike/horse?

There are obvious physical and mental wellbeing issues here as well as economic and climate ones.



Volunteers Bob, Drew and Steve take a break for the camera while the others are still hard at it making a new path to bypass a blind bend on a road.



Installing a new bridge near the Bronie Burn.

Udny Paths Group was formed in 2010 to improve this situation in our patch of northern Aberdeenshire in and around the villages of Udny Green and Pitmedden. We maintain existing paths and increase awareness of them through: social media, editing Open Street Map, and by producing paper and online leaflets. We also create new paths. These could be based on 'desire lines' – routes going in a useful direction which are already getting some foot-fall or based on suggestions of better ways of getting from A to B. We work with local landowners to create or promote paths which bring benefits to the community as well as to the landowners themselves.

Our vision is that everyone knows where the paths are in Udny and can use them to better-appreciate nature, maintain their health, to wander to a café for a snack or a drink or get to the next village without needing a car.

We are fortunate that some of our funding comes indirectly from Udny's community wind turbine – the first mainland wholly community-owned turbine in the UK. Udny Community Trust helps with small funding requirements, and we've received a bench

from Udny Community. Aberdeenshire Council are supporting our next major project – a connection from Pitmedden to the Formartine and Buchan Way, a former railway line which now functions as an off-road route north from Aberdeen.

We have a core group of hardy volunteers aged 10-70+ and we put out calls via our Facebook page if input from more people is needed. More help is always welcome, so please get in touch if you're interested. No experience is necessary – we provide all the training you'll need, and we always stop for a tea break!

[Facebook](#)

udnypaths@gmail.com



*In Scotland you can access and enjoy most of the land if you act responsibly. This is covered by the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#)



Scotland The Bread – Soil to Slice

By **Lyndsay Cochrane**, Project Coordinator



Wheat grown on street corner by Granton Community Gardeners. LYNDsay COCHRANE

Scotland The Bread is an innovative organisation working towards a healthier and more sustainable grain and bread supply in Scotland. We research diverse heritage grain varieties with above average levels of nutrients, grow them organically in the East Neuk of Fife and mill them on-farm into beautifully fine and versatile wholemeal flour for home and professional bakers to transform into

delicious bread. We also run a number of community engagement projects to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to get involved in a better bread system.

One of these is **Soil to Slice**. This programme supports communities throughout Scotland to grow, harvest, thresh, mill and bake with more nutritious grains in their local area. We provide seed



Grain at the Scotland The Bread trial plot being stooked by volunteers in the Soil to Slice network. LYNDSEY COCHRANE

from our ongoing research, guidance on growing, access to small-scale processing equipment, a forum to connect with the wider network of community grain growers and opportunities to share learning about baking real bread. We have selected grains that thrive in an agroecological farming system, meaning that Soil to Slice participants can grow their crop using organic methods and enjoy the improvement to nature and biodiversity that this brings.

Community growing projects are an excellent way to reconnect with a food system from which many are distanced. For crops such as grains, this disconnect can be even greater due to the numerous processing stages required to get from sown seed to baked bread. The Soil to Slice project serves as a tool to bridge this gap by teaching participants what is involved in the creation of their daily loaf.

TCV Community Network members **Green Routes**, based in Stirlingshire, provide hands-on training in horticulture for young people with additional support needs. In 2021, the pupils prepared and sowed plots with our diverse Balcaskie Landrace and Wakelyn YQ population wheats. Although their resulting crop

proved too tempting for local birds (a good indication of the biodiversity present in their walled garden!) they were still able to continue their learning journey using grains grown by Green Routes volunteer Brian who remarked: *“Learning how to grow, and also how to process, not only organic, but also indigenous varieties deliberately adapted to local conditions and selected over centuries for nutritional and health benefit, not just for industrial yield and processing convenience (with resultant biodiversity-loss), is a wonderful learning process for Green Routes students, as well as staff!”*

Indeed, the project aims to go beyond simply outlining the practical steps involved in producing bread. We hope also to highlight the issues present within the current bread system, which has developed in such a way that this staple food has ceased to adequately nourish those who eat it and to actively harm those who, for example, find they cannot tolerate gluten.¹ By encouraging communities to gain a better understanding of what their bread is made from, and how they can make it themselves, we aim to empower local people with the knowledge, skills and tools to create a more healthy, equitable, locally-controlled and sustainable bread supply.



Students sowing grain at Green Routes.

GREEN ROUTES

[Website](#)
[Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)

1 For more details view the [Real Bread Campaign](#) or read *Bread Matters* by Andrew Whitley.

2 A landrace is a locally adapted variety of a domesticated species of plant (or animal) which over time has become well adapted to its local environmental conditions. Source: [SASA](#)

The journey of one of our longest-running Soil to Slice partners, [Granton Community Gardeners](#) in Edinburgh, presents a fantastic illustration of the possibilities opened up through this project. The group sowed their first plot of Rouge d'Ecosse wheat on street corners in 2015. Over successive seasons community members have been involved in sowing, harvesting and selecting the seed to be grown on – an example of ‘[people’s plant breeding](#)’ which has helped them develop a truly local landrace.² In 2019 they opened a pay-as-you-can community bakery serving up delicious, slowly-fermented Real Bread in the area. Now, the garden team is working closely with nearby [Lauriston Farm](#), run by Edinburgh Agroecology Coop, to bulk up their Granton Grains over a much larger area using agroforestry techniques. The two organisations have an exciting long-

term vision to develop on-site processing facilities so that they can work fully from soil to slice: growing and baking with locally-adapted, nutritious grains to create a north-Edinburgh bread supply. This shows that even a small patch of wheat in an unexpected place can overturn accepted ideas of who has control over the bread we eat.

The network of community groups learning to grow and bake their own healthy bread is expanding across Scotland, from Dumfries up to Melvich, in Sutherland. Our special grains have been sown in places as varied as 1 sqm plots in the gardens of ‘[patchwork farmers](#)’ in Dunbar; raised beds on a building site [off Leith Walk](#); outside a [community hospital](#) in Midlothian; and in a half-acre field overlooking Loch Tay. Several schools and nurseries are participating, introducing children (and many teachers!) to traditional sowing songs, the fun of threshing and the satisfaction of eating fresh bread made by their own hand. Each community brings their own flavour to the project, helping to create a diverse, dynamic and delicious movement for better bread!

If you are interested in becoming part of this network of community grain-growers, find out more at [Soil to Slice](#)

make space for nature



For many people, autumn is their favourite time of the year to experience the best that Scotland's great outdoors has to offer, whether that's a walk in the local park or a day on the hill. NatureScot has some tips for everyone to enjoy the season and **Make Space For Nature**

Next time ...

Our Winter Network Bulletin will be issued in December and will feature another diverse selection of TCV projects and Community Network members. Winter is the main tree planting season, so we'll take a look at why trees are so important for biodiversity and how people can get involved in local tree planting schemes.



Free membership

With support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, TCV's Community Network offers free one year membership to community organisations, large and small, who help care for their local greenspaces. The Community Network has 2,000+ member groups spread throughout the UK, with over 300 in Scotland.

**Find out more and join
the Network here**



The Network Bulletin is produced quarterly by The Conservation Volunteers in Scotland and features groups belonging to the Community Network, plus news of TCV's own projects and volunteers.



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TCV Scotland's community, health and environmental volunteering activities are supported by organisations and partners including:



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NatureScot
Scotland's Nature Agency
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Views and opinions expressed in the Network Bulletin do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or of The Conservation Volunteers.

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