

Whitelee News – 2012

Whitelee Stroller Striders- on Winter Location

17th December 2012

We are coming to the end of our first month of our Winter visits with our parent and baby walking group. We have had a lovely time wandering around the trails at Calderglen, despite some adventurous ice and underfoot frost at the start of the month. We are now looking forward to the new year when we will be off walking in Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock. We are having two weeks of Christmas holidays from 19th December- 7th January but will be back with renewed energy on Tuesday 8th January 2013. The January dates for the walk in Dean Castle Country Park are: Tuesday 8th, Tuesday 15th, Tuesday 22nd and Tuesday 29th January. The group meets in the main visitor centre car park at 11am and the walk covers a distance of around 2 miles. We hope you will join us with your little ones in the new year for some fresh air and great chat!

Whitelee Stroller Striders (Winter plans)

19th November 2012

This is a weekly walking group for parents and babies. The group meets every Tuesday morning and goes for a brisk walk of up to 4 miles and is a great way to get some exercise, fresh air and meet other parents with young children. The group has been running for over a year and a half now and has seen great success, particularly in 2012 with a weekly average of 15 people on the walk over the summer. The group had a record number of people coming along in mid September when there were 23 walkers and 22 babies tucked up in their buggies. That is quite a sight to see whizzing around on the tracks below the turbines! The walk usually covers a distance of four miles at a brisk pace and the hardy walkers are happy to do this come rain, hail or shine. Occasionally the route changes to take in the views from the new toposcope on the top of Blackwood hill, where you can see Ailsa Craig, Ben Lomond and if your really lucky on a clear day, the Irish coast!

As the winter is approaching and unfortunately the Whitelee Visitor Centre is closing from December until March, the Stroller Striders are going on location! This means the group will be walking in a different park for three months over the winter. During December, the walk will take place in Calderglen Country Park near East Kilbride. In January, the walk will take place in Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock and during February, the strollers will be pounding the paths in Rouken glen Park, Giffnock. The meeting points the walks in December and January, are the main visitor centre car parks and in February, the meeting point will be the boating pond. The walk will leave at 11am every Tuesday. It is great fun and a fabulous way to keep active and meet friends. Please contact the rangers via the links section, for further information.

Spooktastic

27th October 2012

This was our last event of the 2012 season and it was a great one to finish on. There was all kinds of fun activities available in the visitor centre for all the family to enjoy. Some of the games people were playing included: pumpkin bowling, making a witches potion and a gruesome Frankenstein's monster game. There was a half dissected body abandoned in the hub at the visitor centre and our visitors had to roll their sleeves up and get dirty, trying to find the rats

hidden inside the body. There were rats in the intestines, brains and hidden beneath broken bones. Our brave friends managed to rescue all of the rats from the gloopy, mushy, slimy mess inside the body. Everyone that came along between 6:30 and 8:30pm got the chance to go on a spooky walk with Janet Horne, a witch from the 1700's who acted as a guide and storyteller. There were all kinds of stories from witches to fairies and brownies. Then the group was joined out of the darkness by a headless highwayman who was apprehended by a local clansman and taken away to be detained. It was a cold but clear night and everyone, including us at the ranger service had a great time. Thanks to all of the 120 people that came along and made the event so enjoyable. Look out for our 2013 events programme coming soon, with events starting in March!

Women's Guild - St. Andrew's Methodist Church, East Kilbride

24th October 2012

WCRS were hosted by the Women's Guild at St. Andrew's Methodist Church for an evening where they provided a slide presentation about Whitelee, the ranger service and its work and the surprising history and wildlife of the windfarm. 22 ladies attended the evening presentation and were more than a little surprised by the varied history of the windfarm area as well as the variety of wildlife present at the site. WCRS on the other hand were grateful of the warm welcome and generous spread of cakes provided!

Scotland's Outdoors, Ski & Snowboard Show 2012

20 & 21st October 2012

The Whitelee Access Project including the ranger service and Access Project Officer (Nick Prower) attended the recent outdoor and ski show at the SECC in Glasgow. Over the 2 days of the event several hundred visitors came to the stand manned by the rangers and project officer to find out more about Whitelee and specifically, to find out about the exciting mountain bike (MTB) facility that's about the kick off in the former Brown Hill borrow pit site. Interest in the MTB proposals was intense as everyone from children to parents, school teachers to trail leaders could see the potential for the purpose built track within the windfarm.

On completion the Whitelee MTB track, which has been designed by Phil Saxena of Architrail (designers of the Beijing Olympic and Glasgow Commonwealth tracks), will be one of the best tracks in the central belt, only a 20 minute drive from city centre Glasgow and within sight of the Whitelee visitor centre. In addition to this, there will be seats, shelter and bike racks making the facility truly family friendly.

Community Networks

WCRS hosted 2 volunteer sessions for Community Networks groups to carry out some tree transplanting within the windfarm. During 2 separate sessions, the groups dug up willow trees (*Salix* sp.) that would be lost during the construction of the Brown Hill mountain bike facility that will shortly begin. The trees had self-seeded into the Brown Hill site and rather than seeing them lost, they were put to use in other areas of the site, such as to create a willow copse to provide willow rods for future den building activities for example. Thanks go to Community Networks and their volunteers for all their hard work.

Forestry Commission Integrating Ethnic Minorities

Group visit Whitelee

15th October 2012

A glorious sunny Monday morning saw WCRS host a group brought to the windfarm for the first time via our partners at Forestry Commission Scotland. The group of ladies and children from the south side of Glasgow were from various ethnic minority groups from the middle east and enjoyed a walk out to the Blackwood Hill viewpoint where we looked at local sights and landmarks visible from the top of the hill. It was then back to the visitor centre for lunch and a chat!

Veilwort Survey

4th October 2012

The countryside rangers aided a specialist bryologist to search for the elusive Veilwort (*Pallavicinia lyellii*) at Whitelee on the morning of the 4th. This tiny little leafy liverwort is a UK biodiversity action plan priority species (of conservation concern) and until very recently, Whitelee was the only known Scottish site! Growing in the base of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) tussocks means its not the easiest plant to find and involved the 3 of us crawling around on our hands and knees searching! It was great therefore that we found a good number of plants, more in fact than identified originally, and also noted a possible relationship between the species and field vole at the windfarm! All the plants we found were not only at the base of the grass tussocks but, within a vole run or nest as well.

Follow The Sun

23rd September 2012

Trekking from one end of Whitelee to the other proved to be popular with 6 people from a booked number of 10 joining the countryside rangers for this 10 mile wander through the turbines at the heart of the windfarm. An early start brought everyone to the visitor centre before getting bused to the start point at the Ardochrig entrance. Surprisingly the weather on the day was fabulous for the walk with mild temperatures and bright sunshine and the the group enjoyed having a good chat about the windfarm as we went and were afforded spectacular views while having lunch at the top of Corse Hill. From here it was roughly 8 miles to the end of the walk, back at the visitor centre, but not before taking a well earned tea break along the way - and enjoying the craic too!

Miles for Macmillan event report

19th August 2012

An amazing turnout of charity walkers and supporters guaranteed that the 'Miles for Macmillan' event that took place at Whitelee on the 19th of August was a resounding success. Around 150 people took part in the event walking either the 8 mile Lochgoin circuit route or a longer 15 mile route taking participants through the heart of the windfarm, past the highest point in the site (and East Renfrewshire) at Corse Hill and back again. The weather on the day couldn't have been better with clear skies and warm temperatures. All the participants had a great day and feedback from the event has been extremely positive - so much so that there is already talk of the event running again in 2013. The Macmillan events team performed brilliantly on the day with

participants probably not even realising the huge amount of work that went into the event but the important thing is - everyone had a great time raising funds for this important charity.

Stinging Good Food

8th September 2012

This years ranger service activity for the East Renfrewshire Food Festival was a stinging success with around 100 to 150 people visiting our exhibition and taste table, trying out some of the nettle inspired foods! Top of the menu was a nettle flavoured cheese which combined deliciously with nettle jelly. To wash it down there was nettle cordial and tea and just to emphasis the uses nettles are now put to - there were chewy sweets for the kids...coloured with nettle derived food colouring. As if this delicious spread wasn't enough, there was loads of information on nettle foods, medicine, fabric making etc as well as a quiz for the kids and details of other wild foods.

Miles for Macmillan charity event - Sunday 19th August 2012

Whitelee will be hosting the 'Miles for Macmillan' charity event this Sunday from 10.30 am until 5.30pm. Over 100 participants will be taking part, walking the 8 miles Lochgoin circuit or a longer 15 miles route that goes to the south of the windfarm. Other access users please note that this will mean the windfarm will be very busy during this time and there will also be parking on the first array road next to the visitor centre (with turbines 9 and 40 on it), a marquee and start/finish line at turbine 53 and increased vehicles in the windfarm to support the event. Signage will be in place to advise of any alternate routes for other access users as well as to direct the event.

If you haven't done so, there is still time to register to take part in the event. Please see the external links box.

Every effort has been made to limit the disruption to other access users but please be patient if you are at the windfarm on the day.

Access restrictions to continue

13th August 2012

Scottish Power Renewables have indicated that the current CDM access restrictions on the Spine road, that includes a section of the Lochgoin circular route, will remain in place until at least December 2012. This is due to delays in the extension works taking place in the south-west area of the windfarm and increased traffic on the Spine road as a result of this work.

Stoats at Whitelee visitor centre

9th August 2012

Lots of squeals were recently heard amongst the long grass beside the WCRS cabin at the visitor centre - followed by 2 stoats (*Mustela erminea*) bursting from the undergrowth! A much larger stoat chased a smaller one around the car park for 30 seconds before running back into the long grass. Stoats, which can be recognised from the very similar but smaller Weasel

(*Mustela nivalis*) by their longer black tipped tail, are fast moving and aggressive predators, but its unknown what this quarrel was about - possibly territory. The smaller and slightly startled stoat ran around for a short time longer before vanishing. The sighting was at around 3pm on a Thursday afternoon and only goes to show that wildlife can appear at any time or place, you just need to keep your eyes and ears open!

Dirty den's & Bivvy's II

11th August 2012

A second den building event was run in the Carrot area to allow the large number of families that couldn't get onto the first event the chance to come and build a den. This was yet another busy day for the rangers from WCRS, Forestry Commission Scotland and East Ayrshire Council as 20 came along to take part. Yet again the workmanship and skill shown in creating dens was brilliant and a few different designs were devised. Yet again the weather was great and everyone had a fun afternoon, including the rangers!

While working at the Carrot site, 3 Jay's (*Garrulus glandarius*) were heard and then seen flying overhead and an unrecorded 'hawker' dragonfly was spotted. Unfortunately in the case of the hawker, it wasn't possible to identify it to species.

Nightfliers event

10th August 2012

What a brilliant night was had by everyone at Nightfliers - the WCRS bat event. 26 bat enthusiasts, mainly families, came out on a glorious summer evening and were treated to a spectacular show by Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) bats! The evening began with some 'sugaring' to attract moths, the other nightfliers we were there to see, as well as setting up a moth light trap. On the way back from doing this, one of the group spotted the first bats emerging from their roost - 20 minutes earlier than expected. Who said - never work with animals! Everyone quickly gathered to watch the show as bat after bat seemed to appear from nowhere at the roost site, with possibly more than 100 bats eventually coming out. It was almost daylight when the bats came out and the assembled audience were treated to a display of acroBATic flying for the next hour as the bats flew around the group, over head and through hunting insects. During this time everyone was able to not only see the bats hunting but listen to their echolocation calls and feeding rasps by using bat detectors.

After this amazing display going back to check the moth trap and sugaring points seemed tame but incredibly the bats seemed to follow us (probably following the bugs that were hovering above us). Returns from the moth trap and sugaring were non existent (or the bats had got to them first) but this didn't dampen the spirits as the bats continued to fly around us and a great night was had by all.

D2D Dog Event

4th August 2012

WCRS supported Dams to Darnley's dog event at the park on Saturday the 4th. The day was well attended with around 50 people and their dogs coming along to take part in a variety of activities and to have a go at the dog agility course.

Blackwood Hill Viewpoint

26th July 2012

The viewpoint atop of Blackwood Hill has been completed with a toposcope and ornamental plaques installed and benches in place. The viewpoint makes a great location to walk to from the Whitelee visitor centre as it's only about a mile and half's walk and provides spectacular views out over the windfarm and beyond, with the likes of Ailsa Craig, Ben Lomond and Dumgoyne. The bronze-alloy toposcope that forms the centrepiece of the viewpoint provides a map of the views from the windfarm with notable hills and settlements indicated for visitors up to 100 miles out.

The viewpoint was officially opened by East Renfrewshire Council's environmental convener Councillor Vincent Waters alongside guests including East Renfrewshire Council's chief executive Lorraine McMillan, council leader Councillor Jim Fetcher, local councillor Stewart Miller and representatives from East Ayrshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Power Renewables.

Whitelee's access project officer Nick Prower said: "The viewpoint really gives people somewhere to head for when they set off from Whitelee Visitor Centre. Even in its unfinished state over recent weeks the viewpoint has already proved extremely popular with visitors to Whitelee and should continue to be a popular destination for family groups as the 3 mile round-trip is achievable even with young children."

Dirty den's & Bivvy's

22nd July 2012

A small township sprang up within the Carrot area of the windfarm on the 22nd when families came along on the dirty dens and bivvy's event to create 12 shelters. 35 people came along on what was a grey but dry afternoon and in the space of 2 hours transformed the activity area with a variety of shelters of different shapes and sizes built from natural materials. Everyone involved had a great time and by the end of the session the rain had started to fall lightly - but by this time everyone was safely tucked up in their watertight shelters! The event was run by the Whitelee Countryside Ranger Service, East Ayrshire Council's Whitelee rangers and Forestry Commission Scotland, with assistance from the dams to Darnley rangers.

It's A Bogs Life - Short-eared Owl Sighting!

9th July 2012

The evening for 'It's a bogs life' was rather dreich with rain falling steadily all day - and into the evening of the walk! One hardy soul out of those that had booked came along for the guided walk and what a treat he got - right at the start of the walk we spotted a Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) just flying in over Topfaulds Hill. It quartered around for a short time as we watched through the binoculars, before settling on a fence post. As we continued to watch, its partner then flew in also and settled on another post a short distance away! Not just one owl - but two! After watching the owls for around 10 minutes and grabbing some photos, we continued with our walk where we looked at a number of peat bog plants such as the amazing carnivorous Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) amongst other things.

The rain continued to fall so the walk was cut short but not before finding a rather wet Fox Moth caterpillar (*Macrothylacia rubi*). Photos of the owls and the fox moth can be seen on the Whitelee Countryside Ranger Service Facebook page.

Arty Marty

30th June 2012

Due to the un-predictable Scottish summer weather, Arty Marty, complete with artists smock, palette and french accent, took up residence in the hub of the Whitelee Visitor Centre on Saturday 30th June, instead of his planned outdoor location. There were many natural crafts on offer for all ages to take part in including: woodland cookies which were decorated with rune symbols from the woodland alphabet (and some had lovely drawings decorated onto them too). Also on offer was the creation of clay animals; there were rabbits, deer, adders and foxes all created from natural clay. Some visitors chose to weave a raffia fish, they used fish shaped frames made from willow and very carefully wrapped raffia in and out of the frame to create a lovely natural fish. There was also a large piece of paper attached to the wall where all of the visitors contributed to a charcoal collage where butterflies, flowers, turbines and clouds were drawn on with some messy crumbly charcoal. The most popular craft of the day was the tissue paper flowers. Arty Marty showed all of our visitors how to create a beautiful Dahlia-like flower from a few sheets of tissue paper and some pipe cleaners. Thanks to all of the visitors to the event, everyone had a really great time getting messy with some natural environmental crafts, not least Arty Marty himself - Tres Bien!

Ride with the Wind

16th June 2012

The weather was against the rangers for this event on Saturday 16th June with strong winds and driving rain all over the central belt, let alone at the windfarm! Regardless, 2 hardy adventurers joined the rangers for a (shortened) cycle to the Blackwood Hill viewpoint. It was hard going and East Ayrshire ranger for Whitelee Howard Pitmann, commented that 'it was a wild day and not the best for cycling, but still great fun and encouraging when a couple of people came out regardless of the weather'.

2012 Miles for Macmillan Charity Walk at Whitelee Windfarm

16th June 2012

Macmillan Cancer Support are organising a sponsored walk at Whitelee on the 19th of August 2012. There will be 2 routes that can be walked - one of 8 miles and the other is 15 miles. Why not join them to go 'Miles for Macmillan' at Whitelee on August 19th. Help raise valuable funds to support and improve the lives of people affected by cancer everywhere!

Short-eared Owl Sighting

12th June 2012

One of the countryside rangers was treated to the sight of a Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) quartering or hunting over the moor near Lochgoin reservoir on Tuesday of last week. This impressive day flying owl was observed for over 10 minutes as it searched for prey in the long grass either side of Souters Burn and was seen to make 2 dives to the ground, most likely meaning the end for a vole or shrew, their preferred prey!

Flights of Feathers

11th June 2012

Children and adults alike were treated to some fun facts and interesting activities on the 10th of June when they visited the Whitelee visitor centre. As part of the Flights of Feathers drop in event for Science Week the rangers had a stall alongside the RSPB looking at the science of feathers and how they allow birds to fly. As well as this there were fun facts about birds and examples of how man has tried to copy birds (biomimicry), as well as fun activities for the kids.

Canine Capers

1st June 2012

Whitelee's first ever dedicated dog event took place on the evening of the 1st June. The weather was fabulous for the event with a warm sunny evening enjoyed by both dogs and owners - but this did unfortunately bring out the midges! The event itself was based in the visitor centre car park area and was supported with involvement from the Scottish Siberian Husky Club, K9 Chat/Pawsitive Action, The Dogs Trust, Cani-Fit, Rouken Glen Veterinary Surgery and the East Renfrewshire dog wardens.

It was great to see so many people come out for the event with somewhere between 150 and 200 people attending, many with their dogs along too! There was lots to see for owners, dog socialising and an activity course for the dogs to do and enough to keep everyone happy. The highlight of the evening was a display of dog sledding from the husky club, running a sled and team of 8 dogs along the first array road, visible from the event.

By the end of the evening the exhibitors felt well and truly exhausted but satisfied with the evenings proceedings and people left happy - hopefully with a doggie goody bag too! For photos from the event please see the Whitelee rangers Facebook page.

Blackwood Hill Viewpoint development

11th June 2012

Work on the drystone walling for the viewpoint has been completed and is looking great! The viewpoint roundel can be seen from all over the windfarm, perched atop Blackwood Hill. The toposcope and bench seats needed to complete the viewpoint are due soon after which time there will be an official launch event. Watch this space for further information.

British Horse Society 'windfarm familiarisation' event

25th April 2012

Anyone at the windfarm on Saturday the 21st will have been thrilled at the sight of a 'stable' of horses making their way around the windfarm array roads! The aim of the day was to bring horses and riders together for a trek in the windfarm, with some having never been on a windfarm before. New riders and horses to Whitelee were buddied up with riders and horses who had been before. The day was split into a morning and afternoon session, with the morning session enjoying the best of the sunshine.

In total around 20 horses and riders took to the tracks at Whitelee and thoroughly enjoyed their visit. Please visit our Facebook and Flickr pages to see photos from the day.

Outdoor Pursuit Scotland 2012

25th April 2012

The Whitelee Access Project and Countryside Rangers attended the Outdoor Scotland event at Ingliston where they promoted the work of the access project and ranger service and premiered plans for the single track mountain bike (MTB) course planned for the windfarm. The event was busy throughout the weekend and the information provided about Whitelee and the mountain bike development were enthusiastically received. Check back here soon for more information on the MTB development!

Early morning patrol

11th April 2012

The rangers were out early on Friday the 6th of April, being on site from 05.45am! Dusk and dawn are often the best times for spotting wildlife and with this in mind the rangers went out for an early morning patrol. Highlights of the day included spotting numerous red grouse and curlews as well as a roe deer in the middle of the windfarm. The real bonus of the morning however was the amazing sunrise over Lochgoin reservoir. To see some pictures from the morning please visit our Facebook page (search 'whitelee countryside rangers').

Fly Tipping

11th April 2012

Dumb dumpers continue to blight to scenery of the Whitelee plateau by dumping rubbish in the lay-by's on the B764. If you should see anyone you suspect of fly tipping in the area, please contact the local police.

Whitelee Strollers

Meet every Tuesday morning at Whitelee Visitor Centre

The Whitelee Strollers are a parent and baby walking group who meet at the Whitelee visitor centre every Tuesday morning at 10am to go for a healthy walk in the windfarm - with the little ones safely tucked up in buggies/strollers! The walk is around 4 miles and takes about 1 1/2 hours but this passes quickly due to the wild scenery and good chat along the way! Track conditions can be variable so please bring a suitable buggy - or a baby carrier/backpack. After the walk there is a cafe at the visitor centre that serves hot and cold drinks and snacks.

For further information please contact the Whitelee Countryside Ranger Service.

Blood, Battles & Bogles - A Report from the Front Line

13th March 2012

Blood, battles and bogles kicked off the 2012 Whitelee Ranger Service program in great style with a fully booked session of fun and excitement! This was an action packed afternoon event at the Whitelee Visitor Centre where the kids learned some Scottish and local history about the battles of Langside and Culloden, learned about the cannibal Bean family as well as witches, and were recanted with tales of bogles! The highlight of the day was a re-enactment of the Battle of Culloden which entailed the group splitting into two opposing forces before being kited out with muskets and bayonets, claymores and targe's (cardboard of course!), before heading outside to recreate the battle. During the fighting the highland charge was typically ferocious but the well drilled redcoat line stood firm and defeated the Jacobite army! Everyone involved from parents and children to the countryside rangers - and bemused bystanders had a great day.

There are lots more events in this years program but places are filling up fast. (Please see the events program pages for more information or to download the current program.)

Some brilliant photos from the event can also be seen on our Facebook page. (Go to Facebook and search for Whitelee Countryside Rangers.)

NEW 2012 Events program Out!

7th March 2012

The exciting new 2012 Whitelee Countryside Ranger Service events program is out and packed with events and activities for all ages and interests. Please see the Related Documents section of this page or go to the Whitelee Events Program page for more information. Copies can also be found within libraries throughout East Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and East Ayrshire as well as at the Whitelee Visitor Centre.

Building on the extremely successful events of previous years the 2012 program has a mix of guided walks, crafty activities, bike rides, family events and specialist activities to suit all tastes or back due to high demand in previous years!

Some events are drop-in and no booking is necessary whereas others require advance booking. A number of events have proved hugely popular in previous years and the limited number of places can be taken up extremely quickly so please get in contact swiftly to avoid disappointment!

Wildlife News

7th march 2012

The first Wheatear's have been seen at Whitelee this week, along with the return of the wonderful sound of summer in the form of the high singing Skylark. The Wheatear makes a welcome return from its wintering grounds in Africa and will soon be seen darting around the edges of paths and tracks throughout Whitelee. Unlike the summer migrant Wheatear the Skylark has not been sunning itself abroad through the winter months but keeping quiet awaiting Spring and the return of better weather before courtship begins. The return of this little birds amazing song, that poets have long wrote about, is literally music to the ears filling the air as they fly high and sing all day long.

The rangers are always keen to hear of your wildlife sightings from Whitelee. Why not record your sightings using our form available from our Wildlife and Biodiversity pages or e-mail them at whitelee-crs@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Windfarm News

7th March 2012

The 75 turbine extension to Whitelee has been progressing at pace through the winter and will be nearing completion at the end of summer 2012. Visitors will have noticed the turbines rising sporadically out the woodlands to the south-west of the windfarm. The 'chimney pots' appear first, quickly followed by the nacelle on top and finally the blades. These new higher output machines are different in design and manufacturer from those already at Whitelee and will increase the potential output of the windfarm from 322MW to 593MW.

For further information on the extension please visit the [Whitelee Windfarm web pages](#).