



network bulletin

FOR BTCV SCOTLAND'S COMMUNITY NETWORK

WINTER 2011

Half-price Network offer!

If your organisation has been thinking about joining BTCV's Community Network, now's a great time as we've recently made some improvements to what's on offer. In partnership with the Forum for Environmental Volunteering Activity we've revamped our two levels of Network membership:

Community Network Scotland Plus builds on BTCV's existing group benefits including our popular insurance scheme enabling groups to 'do their own thing', plus the Community Hub of online resources including a Resource Bank of useful information and access to GRANTnet, the comprehensive funding database. Added to these are Scottish learning opportunities provided through the Network Bulletin, our monthly E-bulletin, and more regional events and workshops. More 'hands-on' support is also available to community projects from BTCV Scotland's local offices.

As an introductory incentive to Scotland Plus we're offering half-price membership of £19 to all new members joining before 1 April 2012.

Providing training and learning opportunities is a key element of the Community Network 'offer'.



Leswalt Community Association (page 3) is one of the many diverse organisations who make up the Community Network. Other Network members featured in this issue are the Commonwealth Orchard (page 5) and Urban Roots (page 7).

And, for groups who don't require the full package of paid benefits there are still plenty of information and networking opportunities offered through **Community Network Scotland Standard** – free of charge!

Common to both membership levels is access to the Environmental & Community Leaders Training Programme – opportunities to learn new skills and explore issues on involving different groups in the environment. Many courses are free and for certified courses participants on modest incomes or on benefits may receive support through an Individual Learning Account (ILA), BTCV Scotland now being a Registered ILA training provider.

Community Network membership is open to 'traditional' conservation groups,

and the wider spectrum of community organisations including BME, mental health, and youth agencies, whose participants can gain a great deal from taking part in environmental activities.

Whether your group can benefit from the full package of **Scotland Plus**, or the free learning opportunities through **Scotland Standard**, BTCV's Community Network has a lot to offer. For information visit www.btcv.org/scotland or contact Graham Burns on 0141 552 5294, email g.burns@btcv.org.uk





Pictured (from left) are Margaret, Hilary, Kay and Elaine, members of the Glenside Green Gym in West Kilbride, using some of the group's new tools purchased through the Chestnut Fund.

New members

A slew of groups and organisations have joined the Community Network in recent months, either as paid members, typically to access insurance cover, or as free members – often resulting from their contact with BTCV Scotland's staff 'on the ground' in carrying out projects. So, whatever their particular route to joining, a warm welcome to the following new Network members:

Ability Centre Support Services (Livingston)
 Alyth Path Users Group (Perthshire)
 Ashcraig School (Glasgow)
 BLES Training (Bathgate)
 Community Rehabilitation and Brain Injury Service (Livingston)
 Cumbernauld Village Action for the Community
 Dunbar in Bloom (East Lothian)
 Eilean Glas Trust (Isle of Harris)
 Flexi-Care Conservation Group (Paisley)
 Forehill Primary School (Ayr)
 Freuchie Primary School (See page 8)
 Friends of Plean Country Park (Stirlingshire)
 Friends of Rosshall Park & Gardens (Glasgow)
 Friends of Sunnybank Park (Aberdeen)
 Greener Leith (Edinburgh)
 Inverleith Allotment Association (Edinburgh)
 Newcastle Primary School (Glenrothes)
 Newton Primary School (Ayr)
 North Bughtlin Tenants Association (Edinburgh)
 Open Door Accommodation Project (Broxburn)
 Patna Primary School (East Ayrshire)
 Shettleston Community Growing Project (Glasgow)
 St John's Hospital (Livingston)
 St Ninian's Primary School (Prestwick)
 Tarbolton Primary School & Nursery (S. Ayrshire)
 The Brodie Orchard (Forres)
 The Commonwealth Orchard (See page 5)
 The Concrete Garden (Glasgow)
 The Field Group Duddingston (Edinburgh)
 The Greenhouse Environment Group (Dingwall)
 Tore Toddler Group (Ross-shire)
 Toronto Primary School (Livingston)
 West Lothian on the Move (Broxburn)
 Ypeople (Glasgow)

The Chestnut Fund

When any conservation group first gets going it usually has to beg, borrow and find the necessary tools from wherever possible – the garden shed, back of the garage, and grandad's allotment.

This motley collection of implements usually consists of the good, the bad, and the downright dangerous. But when a group gets a bit more organised it can't rely on these often bent and rusty antiques.

If members have some spare cash available they can nip down to B&Q (or the BTCV shop) to buy some shiny new spades and they're sorted. But if funds are tight, help may be at hand from the Chestnut Fund – an independent charity administered by BTCV.

The Chestnut Fund provides small grants to help groups with start-up or support costs, including tool purchase. These are modest sums of money – up to £150 start-up and

£350 support – but can nevertheless be the difference between something happening or not.

Dozens of organisations throughout the UK have benefited from the Chestnut Fund, which in the past year has included several groups in Scotland: Oatlands Development Trust, Craigmillar Woods Action Group, Anstruther & District Allotments Association, and Glenside Green Gym.

Chestnut Fund grants are not guaranteed but may be worth applying for if you believe your group qualifies.

For further details and an application form, visit www.btcv.org/network



Pictured above are Conservation Volunteers (CVs) from the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) working at Mar Lodge, near Braemar, on Deeside. The CVs are a diverse group of people who regularly carry out conservation work on many of the Trust's fantastic historic properties, gardens and mountain landscapes. Mar Lodge is just one of them. There are five regional CV groups and new volunteers are always welcome, particularly at the moment in Tayside and Grampian. Full details including project programmes for each of the regional groups are available at www.nts.org.uk/Volunteering/Outdoor

Many thanks...

... to all the groups who took part in our recent survey of Community Network members, the results of which help us to explain to Government departments and others, of the impressive scale of environmental volunteering undertaken throughout the country. The names of the participating groups were placed in a prize draw, the winners being the Three Village Gardening Club from Ayrshire who used their £50 voucher to purchase some of the excellent practical Conservation Handbooks, published by BTCV.



Local volunteers were recently joined by the BTCV team from Ayr to clear out the choked pond. Yes, it was pelting down!

COMMUNITY NETWORK MEMBER

Leswalt Community Association

Aldouran wetland and sensory garden lies on the outskirts of Leswalt village near Stranraer, on the South-west tip of Scotland. The garden has been created by Leswalt Community Association, as **Jane Sloan**, Voluntary Project Manager, explains...

Aldouran Garden was taken on by Leswalt Community Association following the demise of a charity which had originally intended to incorporate it within plans for a holiday village for children with special needs. The charity had completed basic work to make a series of raised beds, a pond with a boardwalk and a bird hide.

In 2005 the small community of Leswalt rose to the challenge of taking the project forward, firstly finding the funding to create paths to enable public access and secondly, by the efforts of local volunteers, to reduce the gradient of the boardwalk which was too steep for wheelchair users.

In the six years since they took over the project, the community volunteers have worked tirelessly to rationalise the number of raised beds, plant flowers and trees, provide picnic benches and erect information boards. 2011 has seen the replacement of rotting wooden raised beds with dry stone walling and the building by volunteers of a boat shaped picnic feature for the children.

The project is adjacent to the Aldouran Glen woodland which is owned by the Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS). A circular walk leads from Leswalt through the wetland garden and woodland before descending back to the village with spectacular views over Loch Ryan.

Close co-operation with WTS has led in recent times to volunteers also helping maintain the woodland path, and a

plan to erect interpretation signs in the woodland to enhance the whole Aldouran experience.

Leswalt's community volunteers include 14 or so adults plus the Aldouran Wetland Watchers, a group of approximately 20 children aged between six and sixteen who help care for the project.

Saturday morning 'tidy ups' run throughout the spring and summer months when adults and children work together on planting, weeding and general maintenance. These sessions are very

industrious and always end up with a fun-filled picnic for all!

As well as being a popular recreational area – a footfall counter registers around 5,000 visitors per annum – the area is also increasingly used as an educational facility with visits from local primary schools and nurseries to study wildlife and to pond dip.

The introduction this year of a whiteboard and visitors book to the bird hide has been illuminating, with sightings of a multitude of wetland and woodland birds, butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, deer and red squirrels which visit the feeders in the woodland next to the hide.

Visitor book comments invariably speak of a 'peaceful, beautiful place' and many congratulate Leswalt Community Association for the way the area is maintained and for encouraging a wider diversity of wildlife both in the garden and the wetland.

The popularity of the project was exemplified in July 2011 when, for the first time, a young couple chose the garden as the venue for their wedding.

Leswalt Community Association is glad to be a member of BTCV's Community Network. From the beginning we have arranged public liability insurance through BTCV and have found the prices very competitive. It's great to have the support of the organisation behind us and we were thrilled recently to receive help from BTCV Ayr in tackling the problem of our choked pond. Over two days the Ayr team worked extremely hard beside our own volunteers in conditions which were wet overhead as well as underfoot. The job was done in much less time than anticipated and with good humour into the bargain! Thanks a million BTCV.

info@leswaltwetlandgarden.org.uk
www.leswaltgarden.org.uk



Aldouran Wetland Garden



Nick Underdown (left) with Dr Willie Yeomans (Clyde River Foundation) electrofishing for signal crayfish in the Clydesburn (Clyde Catchment) near Elvanfoot. The signal crayfish is an invasive non-native species from North America which is ousting some of our native species.

CAROLINE MCGILLIVRAY

Supporting river-based communities

By **Nick Underdown** –
Kelvin Catchment Officer/
Natural Communities trainee*

Rivers have been perhaps one of the most ubiquitous and overlooked ecological casualties of the 20th century in Scotland. Whilst powering (and flushing) industrial development, the burns and rivers in and around our towns have been canalised, culverted, polluted and generally neglected for decades. But since the 1980s Scotland's 'freshwater resource' has received some much-needed protection in the form of stringent European legislation and a growing recognition of the ecosystem services that rivers provide.

The Clyde River Foundation is one of 25 river and fisheries trusts across Scotland which is weathering this changing policy landscape. I started my traineeship with the Foundation at the start of February 2011, and since then it has been a steep, but very enjoyable, learning curve.

The Foundation works across the Clyde catchment, from the spring-pure headwaters of the River Clyde high in the South Lanarkshire hills to the urban burns which feed directly into the tidal estuary. The rivers and tributaries combined have a total length of 4,244km – this is conservation on a broad scale and something that BTCV, through the Natural Communities programme, is keen to support.

I soon realised that the Foundation does two things very well – the first is science:

By conducting fish, macro-invertebrate and habitat surveys, the Foundation monitors the condition and biological health of these rivers. Part of my role has been to assist with this data-gathering. Having undertaken electrofishing training at Barony College in Dumfriesshire, I've helped with the Foundation's fieldwork season of fish surveying. This involves navigating our way across the Clyde catchment to sometimes innocuous wee burns, before counting and measuring surprising numbers of trout, salmon, minnows, grayling, lamprey and a host of other freshwater species.

The second thing the Foundation does well is education:

Since 2001, over 13,000 pupils across the River Clyde catchment have participated in the Foundation's flagship project, *Clyde in the Classroom*. In my first week, we launched a sister project, *Kids and the Kelvin*, installing a classroom trout hatchery that enables pupils to rear and then release young trout (or fry) into their local burns. We then took the children electrofishing and kick-sampling for invertebrates in the same river to provide a hands-on understanding of their river's ecology.

This is outdoor learning in more ways than one. Passersby often stop to see a group of school children wading about in their wellies, or peer over a bridge to watch an electrofishing demonstration in the burn below. There is often a perception that burns are too polluted to sustain fish populations, so it is often local people, not just school pupils, who are learning about the condition of their local rivers. I built a simple website for the project (www.kidsandthekelvin.com) using photos and video we had gathered and this helped to spread the message into the local community.

Community involvement in the work of the Foundation is one of the main features of my traineeship, reinforced by the support I receive through BTCV's wide experience of community-based projects and the mentoring through the Natural Communities programme.

The Clyde River Foundation encourages local communities to look after their rivers and in the past few months I've spoken with a wide range of community 'stakeholders' in one of the Clyde's main sub-catchments – the River Kelvin. Over 280,000 people live within the Kelvin area and some have strong and varied relationships with the river. Some are anglers; some are commuters; some work on the river through organisations like SEPA, and others through nothing other than a basic appreciation of nature are keen to contribute to making their river healthy.

By speaking to these groups and finding out what they need and the pressures they face, our idea is to bring together the many people who share a passion for the river. The resulting network could then provide a supporting 'hub' to exchange ideas and best practice for river improvements – whether it be keeping an eye on pollution through angling monitoring initiatives, or clean-ups organised by local groups. This work is, and always will be, on-going, and I hope to continue with this beyond the completion of my traineeship.

Hopefully, our rivers will increasingly benefit from organisations like the Clyde River Foundation working more closely with the villages, towns and cities that depend upon them.

www.clyderiverfoundation.org

● More information about the Natural Communities programme and its trainees can be found at www.btcv.org/naturalcommunities

Unleashing the power of a fruitful Scotland...

Most groups belonging to the Community Network are dedicated to caring for a particular greenspace or locality. A few however have a national focus, an example being the Commonwealth Orchard, as Director **John Hancox** explains.

We've been working on the Commonwealth Orchard* for nearly three years now, and it's an idea that's been bearing fruit – both metaphorical, and literal. We've recently finished a run of many 'apple days' across Scotland, from Oban to St Andrews, Stirling, Glasgow, Inverness and Tain, down to the Borders. We also took an apple collection to the Scottish Parliament – showing MSPs that fruit really does grow in Scotland.

And now we are gearing up for our next busy period – tree planting season. Over the last two or three years demand for fruit trees has continued to grow rapidly. The expert on all things apples, John Butterworth, with whom we worked extensively, has now retired, so to keep a supply of suitable heritage and Scottish fruit



Youngsters and fruit – it does happen!

trees going, we have set up Scottish Fruit trees (www.scottishfruittrees.com) to help meet the demand.

It's getting to the time of year to think about turning that boring bit of grassland or overgrown wasteland into a vibrant community orchard. Or perhaps getting a school orchard planted so our young people can have the experience of growing, harvesting and enjoying fruit they planted themselves. The time for planting is late November to March (though really the best time to plant a fruit tree is 20 years ago!)

We've been supporting a raft of interesting projects across Scotland to develop fruit growing projects. For instance St Andrews Orchard Group has developed a community orchard in Stanks Park, as well as supporting the apple day at St Andrews Botanic Garden, and we're supporting Go Greener in East Renfrewshire to plant a heritage orchard in Rouken Glen Park. We've also helped the Salvation Army with rescued fruit and worked on an apple day with Transition West Kilbride. Everywhere

we look, there seems to be a new fruitful activity kicking off. We have also worked with schools across Scotland through our www.fruitfulschools.com project.

One of the most interesting recent schemes we've supported is a fruit planting project in Tarbert, Kintyre, which last year planted approximately 300 fruit trees in local schools, the doctor's surgery, and with householders across Tarbert. This year the project is being re-launched and expanded to cover a wider area – an all-Kintyre Orchard, with all the health and educational benefits – and it's fun too.

It's not a huge leap to think beyond an all-Kintyre Orchard today; why not develop an all-Scotland Orchard tomorrow? It would be great to see loads of regional orchards – an all-Fife orchard, or an Aberdeenshire orchard, all linking up to create a Fruitful Scotland.

We'd love to hear from growing projects, schools and allotments that might be interested in the development of fruit growing in their area. We can help with training, supply of trees and other essentials and can point groups to possible sources of funding. We also run networking events where folk meet up and share fruitful ideas. So whether you're new to growing, or are a veritable king of the Pippins, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

For more information call 0778 606 3918 email john@commonwealthorchard.com www.commonwealthorchard.com

● *The Commonwealth Orchard was formed around the old idea of the commonwealth – something created for the common good, and also to provide a healthy legacy for Glasgow's 2014 Commonwealth Games.*



JOHN HANCOX

Putting down fruity roots in St Andrews

Exciting finds...



LORNE GILL / SNH

Daisy Shepperd pictured in her natural habitat – Wester Moss raised bog

INSET: A rare find – the Bog Sun-jumper spider (*Heliophanus dampfi*)

Daisy's discovery

While working on her lowland raised bogs project, **Daisy Shepperd**, one of our Natural Talent apprentices, made a rare find during a Bioblitz event at Wester Moss, Fallin, near Stirling.

Keen-eyed Daisy spotted a specimen of the fantastically named Bog Sun-jumper spider, a wee critter only 3mm long, which had previously been recorded at just three sites throughout the UK, two being the nearby Flanders and Ochtertyre Mosses.

David Pryce, an entomologist with Perth Museum and Art Gallery, helped Daisy collect specimens during the Bioblitz event and these were then verified by Chris Cathrine, Conservation Assistant at Buglife Scotland.

The Bioblitz event was organised by BTCV Scotland, Stirling Council Rangers, Buglife, and Butterfly Conservation Scotland which has recently purchased Wester Moss as its newest nature reserve, particularly for its healthy population of Large Heath butterflies.

Daisy was well chuffed with her discovery: "It was very exciting to find the Bog Sun-jumper thriving at a new site and I'm keen to visit other bogs in the local area to see if it's lurking elsewhere. Discovering the spider

at Wester Moss highlights the importance of lowland raised bogs as habitats for invertebrates, particularly bog specialists, as well the merits of Bioblitz events and biological recording in general. If we don't know what's out there, how can we protect these species?"

More news from Daisy and the other Natural Talent apprentices can be found at www.btcv.org/naturaltalent

Jo's Amazing Amazon Adventure

It's a long way from Glasgow to Equador, as **Jo Ridley** recounts...

In October 2011 I took a year's sabbatical from my role as BTCV Volunteer Development Officer in Glasgow to spend some time in South America. I initially spent three months learning Spanish and then worked on an expedition in the Amazon with Global Vision International (GVI).

I was based in 1800 hectares of mainly primary rainforest neighbouring the tiny village of Mondana, located on the Napo River between the cities of Tena and Coca, in the east of Equador. GVI is making a difference in Equador's Amazon by supporting the Yachana Foundation* and local efforts to preserve the rainforest and its extraordinary diversity of plants and animals.

My GVI expedition experience was littered with highlights. During one of our early morning bird surveys we found a 10ft boa constrictor! I was also part of a group to see a rare glass frog – one of an amazing frog family which has a transparent skin allowing you to see inside its small body. Conservationists are especially interested in these beautiful creatures because they are good bioindicators – species that provide clues about the health of the environment where they live.

As you would expect in the Amazon, the weather was generally hot and humid, interspersed with thunderous downpours of rain. I loved experiencing the rainforest at night on nocturnal frog and mammal surveys; learning bush skills and rainforest ecology; exploring different parts of the Amazon; and learning how to navigate in the forest. It was all fascinating stuff far removed from my normal everyday life.

But now I'm back in Glasgow experiencing altogether different wildlife species and habitats – but still interspersed with thunderous downpours of rain!

*www.yachana.org.ec



ABOVE: The fascinating glass frog

BELOW: Up close and personal with a Boa constrictor



Developing Urban Roots

By **Patrick Holland**,
Volunteer Worker

Urban Roots is a community-led environmental organisation based in the Southside of Glasgow. Originally formed as the Toryglen Gardening Club in 2005, the group grew and evolved (with some help from BTCV), finally becoming Urban Roots in June 2009.

We have three core project areas: Community Gardening, Conservation and Biodiversity, and Climate Change Education. We offer local people the opportunity to volunteer in our community gardens and community woodland, as well as offering short courses on a range of topics related to the environment.

We have three community gardens in Toryglen, all within short walking distance of each other. Every Tuesday and Wednesday we have gardening sessions in one of the gardens, which provide the volunteers with an opportunity to learn a wide range of skills around growing food in an urban environment. We grow a variety of edible produce using organic methods and permaculture principles. This produce is available to members of the local community, but the gardening sessions are



The Urban Roots gardening crew at work in the community gardens

about much more than growing food. The physical and mental benefits of community gardening have been well documented, and we often see people moving on to further education or employment after being involved with our projects.

Malls Mire Community Woodland is eight hectares of native trees and plants, hidden away and surrounded by housing schemes and railway tracks. Every Thursday a dedicated group of volunteers meet to enhance the biodiversity, improve access and develop the site's educational potential. Projects to date have included pond creation, boardwalk and path construction, wildflower planting and non-native species removal. Most recently we hosted a Prince's Trust programme, giving twelve young people opportunities to learn about and be involved in their local environment. Our own volunteers often access BTCV training in brushcutters and strimmers, working with young people, and other relevant areas.

Our courses also offer an opportunity to learn new and interesting things. Over the last year we've organised courses on

understanding climate change (Your Money, Your Planet), climate-friendly cooking (Great Grub), and commuter cycling (Cycling with Confidence). We've also offered one-day workshops on topics such as foraging, beekeeping and herbal medicine, which have been attended by local people and others from outside Toryglen.

On top of our free courses, we've also provided an opportunity for people to do a Permaculture Design Course at a much cheaper rate than normal. This course was held over three weeks last November and will be held again early next year.

We've also organised a range of weekend events geared towards raising awareness of a particular issue, such as energy-saving. Members of the public can come along and learn how to reduce the energy costs within their household. Urban Roots is also very active in raising awareness of climate change and the importance of reducing your 'carbon footprint'.

One way we've done this is by creating a Carbon Footprint Survey. Householders are questioned on their food, energy, transport, waste and consumer choices, and are given the opportunity to borrow an energy monitor if they wish. Between November and March, we're also holding Film Nights in a local Community Education Centre to give people a chance to learn more about environmental issues in other parts of the world.

Our plans for the future are to take on a new site of approximately one acre to develop as forest gardens, growing spaces and allotments. We hope to grow enough produce to sell, so we can begin to generate an income for the organisation. We also plan to carry on the great work we have started over the past few years, inspiring people to take action on the big environmental issues by starting local, but thinking global.

Information: www.urbanroots.org.uk



Keep Scotland tidy!



ANNA DENNIS

At work, cutting one of the cladding boards for the flatpack classroom

Flatpack in Freuchie!

By **Anna Dennis**, Volunteer Development Officer

BTCV's Fife midweek volunteers groups recently completed one of the biggest (literally) challenges they've faced. In May 2011 we began a project at Freuchie Primary School which included erecting a fence around an existing pond, building planters, lining and bark-chipping some fairly large areas, installing seats... Oh, and erecting an almighty four-metre-high flatpack outdoor classroom! All of this work was due to take approximately four days to complete. How wrong we were.

Our first day went well enough with the help of employees from BSKyB, based in nearby Dunfermline, who built two of the planters and dug post holes for the octagonal classroom. Then things got complicated because we had a giant stack of timber of different shapes and sizes but no parts list. When the plans referred to attaching the 'bevelled platform boards' to the 'horizontal platform boards' we had to figure out by process of elimination which particular bits of timber were required. However, once we had this cracked it became much clearer how it all fitted together.

When the main rafters were up a representative from UAC, the manufacturers of the classroom, came to see how things were going and confirmed we were on the right track (phew!). So, the midweek group continued for a few more days on the roof structure as well as edging, weeding and lining around the planters. We then started putting on the roof boards.

At this point we still had a huge pile of timber left so we assumed (along with the headteacher) that the inside was supposed

to be clad as well – a daunting prospect and we still had the seating and fencing to do. Over the next few months we plugged away at the project, in between our other commitments.

By the start of October the end was in sight. We discovered that the inside did not need cladding after all and the vast quantity of timber delivered at the beginning had been a mistake! We all breathed a sigh of relief and got on with the remaining jobs. The seating was finished, the last few bits of the classroom tidied up, the fence was completed, and the last bag of gravel barrowed around to the classroom. In classic flatpack tradition we had a variety of nuts and bolts left over. However, the structure was signed off for insurance purposes, so we're confident these were simply extras and not essential!

On our last day we were invited to the school's end of week assembly. The BTCV team were chuffed to be included in the handing out of certificates. We received four certificates ourselves including *Effective Contributors* and *Successful Learners*, followed at the end of the assembly by a plethora of thank you

The Freuchie project is an example of BTCV Scotland's Natural Learning programme – in this case supporting a school project from start to finish and enabling delivery of Curriculum for Excellence outcomes and experiences, and links with the Strategy for Outdoor Learning. Other support for schools includes help to access funding, designing and planning school grounds projects, supporting staff to deliver environmental education activities, delivery of health programmes including the BTCV Green Gym, support to schools to carry out hands-on environmental monitoring programmes, and tailored training packages for schools and teachers. For further information about the Natural Learning programme contact your local BTCV office or Julie Grant, Education Development Officer, on 01292 525010, or email Scotland-education@btcv.org.uk

cards, letters and pictures from all of the different classes. Needless to say, despite the headaches and pfaaf, sleepness nights, head scratching and confusion, we were all incredibly proud of what we had achieved. We celebrated with a well-earned barbecue in the sunshine next to 'our' classroom.

So, the initial four day project turned into a marathon five-month affair spread over 20 visits involving 150 volunteer days, generating approximately 300 cups of tea and 600 biscuits!

And my favourite quote from one of the pupils' cards was: "You worked really hard, even when it was raining."

● *Anna has since returned to work in our Edinburgh office to be replaced in Fife by Dave Barfoot.*

The finished classroom, ready for action



ANNA DENNIS

Going green in Greenock

During the summer of 2011, **Mairi and William Wright** from Greenock attended a series of training workshops as part of BTCV Scotland's Biodiversity Mentorship Programme. The aim of the programme is to train interested individuals in basic biodiversity knowledge which they can share with other members of their communities. Here, Mairi and William explain their involvement in the programme and a local community garden project...

We are members of the Belville Community Association which is involved in setting up the Bally Brae Community Garden on a demolition site in our area. It's a fairly built-up part of town and the proposed garden site is where several high flats once stood. It's quite a large area so, as well as constructing raised bed allotments, the aim is to create a pleasant community space

with a wildlife area, where people can relax and unwind and feel the benefits of nature, and improve their mental and physical health. Developing the project will also encourage greater community spirit.

The community association introduced us to BTCV, the work it does with communities and the support it can provide to this kind of project. The Biodiversity Mentorship Programme sounded like a good way to learn more about biodiversity in general, to identify what we already have at our site and to help us provide suitable habitats to encourage wildlife.

We attended a series of workshops at locations in Glasgow and Inverclyde:

- Biodiversity Awareness
- The Rocky Shore
- Lichens
- Hymenoptera
- Pond Life

We thoroughly enjoyed each workshop and found them all very worthwhile. The only disappointment was the cancelling of the Urban Flora and Fauna event which we were particularly looking forward to. Never

mind – next year! The workshops were well run and interesting and the trainers enthusiastic, welcoming, keen to pass on their knowledge and offering support and information for our project. We found it far easier to learn by having someone show us what to look for and identify what it was, rather than looking in books or online which had previously been our only sources of information. We learned a remarkable amount in a short time although we are now even more aware of how much more there is to know about biodiversity. It was also a lot of fun!

We held a community event in October at the garden site which BTCV attended with pond specimens to capture the interest of the local children who will play a big part in the project's future. Their knowledge, support and enthusiasm will help encourage more of the community to become involved with the garden so that the project will gain from their input and the whole community will benefit from the project.

● *The Bally Brae project is one of many in the Inverclyde and Argyll & Bute areas supported by Lower Clyde Greenspace.*



LEFT: John McFarlane of BTCV (left) with Mairi and William Wright during one of the Biodiversity Mentors workshops.

RIGHT: Here's one we made earlier!

BELOW: Local youngsters learn about pond life during the Bally Brae community event.



Through Scotland Counts, the country's school pupils can become Citizen Scientists, helping to monitor our environment.



Scotland Counts

For more information about Scotland Counts, contact Stevie Jarron, Citizen Science Co-ordinator on 01786 476179 or email s.jarron@btcv.org.uk

By **Stevie Jarron**, Citizen Science Co-ordinator

BTCV Scotland recently launched Scotland Counts, a two year programme which aims to develop environmental citizenship throughout Scotland by giving volunteers of all ages more opportunities to get involved in environmental monitoring. The programme will develop a Scotland Counts Network involving all organisations throughout Scotland working on Citizen Science projects. It will act as a hub for sharing good practice, developing new projects and feeding ideas between the agencies who use data, the organisations who produce it, and the funders who support both.

Scotland Counts will deliver the Schools Citizen Science Pilot Project initiated earlier this year by SEPA, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland. The project is working with primary and secondary school pupils in Glasgow and Peebles using the Curriculum for Excellence to encourage environmental recording and better awareness of local flood risk – a problem faced by many communities.

Scotland Counts will develop new Citizen Science initiatives through:

- The development of an extensive and up-to-date knowledge of data collection techniques and technologies.
- Initiating and supporting new partnerships and projects.

Engaging people is at the heart of Scotland Counts.

As well as supporting those already carrying out Citizen Science projects, the programme will encourage new people in our communities to get involved by giving them more opportunities to monitor local greenspaces.

There is some first class Citizen Science work already going on throughout Scotland and BTCV Scotland is really looking forward to building on this foundation to support the development of a vibrant Scotland-wide Citizen Science movement over the coming years.

In the next issue of the Network Bulletin we'll outline ways in which groups belonging to the Community Network can participate in Scotland Counts, and contribute information from their own communities towards Scotland's environmental knowledge.

Citizen Science is a term to describe the involvement of the general public, including school children, in collecting information about wildlife species and habitats, plus other important aspects of the environment. This isn't restricted to rare species in remote locations – anyone taking part in a garden bird survey is a Citizen Scientist! The information gathered by 'ordinary' people can help professional scientists, Government agencies and others, in protecting our environment.

Stevie Jarron,
Citizen Science
Co-ordinator



BTCV Scotland events round-up...

Big Green Weekend

Over the weekend of October 22-23 thousands of people joined BTCV's Big Green Weekend to celebrate, and contribute something towards, the great outdoors. The BGW was held in eight locations throughout the UK and a further eight in Europe, organised with some of BTCV's international partners. Scottish participation took place on Saturday 22 in the leafy surroundings of Cammo Estate, on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

A range of family-friendly activities were laid on including bird box making, bug and beastie identification, wildflower planting advice, plus a fungi foray in the woods led by mycologist Neville Kilkenny, a former Natural Talent apprentice. The day coincided with a conference of European voluntary agencies being held in Edinburgh, organised by CSV. A group of the conference delegates escaped from their venue for a few hours to help with some practical work to clear trees and vegetation from some of the estate's pathways.

Thanks to everyone who made the day such a success, particularly David Kyles of Edinburgh City Council Ranger Service, CSV, and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.



ABOVE: CSV conference delegates making a difference in Edinburgh

BELOW: Some of Cammo Estate's wildlife!



Over the past year or so BTCV Scotland has organised a number of programmes with the Prince's Trust to involve young people in environmental activities, providing them with new skills and experiences.

Pictured here is a group of Glasgow lads with their Prince's Trust certificates, plus BTCV's Alyson Hunter (left) and Ezme Boyd, who helped run this particular programme. This was Ezme's final BTCV project, so good luck to her and best wishes for the future.



Angus MacDonald, MSP, is pictured here with some of our Green Gym volunteers at the Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre in Grangemouth.

Volunteer Officer Bryan Deakin gave Angus a tour of the site, including the wildflower nursery, which had long been on his 'wish list' of visits within his Falkirk East constituency. We were glad to oblige and give Angus the opportunity to chat with volunteers and Nursery Manager Nancy McIntyre, and learn about the great work undertaken at Jupiter.

Green Gym shapes up

The Kilsyth Green Gym was launched a few months back when Jamie Hepburn MSP did the honours by planting a silver birch tree at Dumbreck Marsh Local Nature Reserve (*pictured below*). Jamie and the assembled guests, including local councillors David Key and Jean Jones, braved a prolonged downpour to mark the event, organised by Will Ferguson-Smith, Volunteer Development Officer.

Will is keen to involve as many people as possible in the Green Gym, so if you live in the Kilsyth area and have a few hours to spare on a Tuesday afternoon, why not give him a call – he'll be delighted to hear from you. Contact Will on 07917 393167 or w.ferguson-smith@btcv.org.uk



The Network Bulletin is published by BTCV Scotland. Views and opinions expressed in the Bulletin do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or BTCV.

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Printed on recycled paper

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To your health

TV presenter Gail Porter paid a visit to Glasgow recently to hand over a cheque to support some of BTCV Scotland's conservation-based health projects.

Gail is pictured at the Kennyhill Community Allotments with David Graham, our Healthy Communities Development Manager, and Professor Jennie Popay, Chair of the People's Health Trust, which distributes money raised from the new Health Lottery to health-related causes throughout Great Britain.

Needless to say, we were delighted to receive this money which will help fund new Green Gyms in North Ayr.

Green Gyms are a fantastic opportunity for people to improve their fitness whilst doing something positive for the environment.



PEOPLES HEALTH TRUST

Over the coming months we hope to receive similar levels of support from the People's Health Trust to fund further Green Gyms in Paisley, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and East Fife.

● Look out for a series of Green Gyms coming soon to North East Glasgow, funded and hosted by Glasgow Life. For more details contact Julie Wilson on 07917 460495, or email Julie.wilson@btcv.org.uk



CLAIRE DALLARD

Volunteers repairing a drystone dyke at Balmedie, Aberdeenshire

Let's rock!

Drystone walls (or drystane dykes) are a familiar but often overlooked and neglected feature of the Scottish landscape.

They are currently the subject of a PhD study being undertaken by Mhairi Paterson, through Glasgow University. Mhairi is examining the cultural heritage of drystone walls, their value today, and how to ensure a sustainable future for drystone walling, and other traditional rural crafts.

Her study coincides with a training project being undertaken by BTCV's Aberdeen office involving four Aberdeenshire communities, encouraging local people to learn the skills required to repair and care for the drystone walls in their own locality. Mhairi will be involved in this scheme,

which is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, but she's also interested in dyking projects from other parts of the country, particularly as dyking developed over the years (centuries!) with differing regional styles. So, if you are involved in a dyking project, Mhairi would be keen to hear about it. Contact her by emailing: m.paterson.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Forestry training

A new training programme for 18-25 year olds has recently started to give young learners skills and experience to help them gain employment in the environmental, landscaping and forestry sectors. The Forestry and Environment Learning Programme is being run by BTCV Scotland and the Forestry Commission Scotland. The programme, and some of the young folk involved, will be highlighted in the next Network Bulletin.

Keep up-to-date with details of the latest BTCV Scotland training courses plus news of other environmental events, networking opportunities, funding etc, by subscribing to our monthly E-bulletin at www.btcv.org/scotlandtraining

BTCV Scotland's community and environmental volunteering activities are supported by:

