



The Friends of Easter Craiglockhart Hill e-Newsletter Winter 2022/23

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Friends of Easter Craiglockhart Hill e-newsletter.

In this edition we update you with the goings-on on Easter Craiglockhart Hill over the Autumn and Winter months.

We have an exciting new plans to improve the curling rink area at Craiglockhart Terrace, and the opportunity for you to tell us what you think about them. We'll also provide updates on the Meadowspot and Hilltop Paths, as part of our report on improvements to the LNR.

There will be a comprehensive update on what's happening with our local swans, and plenty of other wildlife news too!

We will report on our recent volunteering activities, summarise achievements, and let you know how you can get involved or support our work, including becoming a FECH trustee, or taking part in fund-raising activities such as our

planned Spring Plant Sale.

Happy Valley Garden

We are delighted to have been awarded a grant of £10,000 from the National Lottery's Grants for All fund. We will use the grant to develop a programme of gentle guided walks for older people and people with mobility difficulties. We also want to improve the appearance of the Craiglockhart Terrace entrance to Easter Craiglockhart Hill.



This entrance is one of the most commonly used but not particularly welcoming. We would like to improve the appearance of this area with raised beds, garden areas, and better seating.

Check out our proposal here:

https://mcusercontent.com/841771f81004ed2fbcec6c6b0/files/755eec39-e0bd-bcc5-4e7e-32c58d57740e/EASTER_CRAIGLOCKHART_HILL_LOCAL_NATURE_RESE_RVE.docx

Path Update

It was our pleasure to host the re-opening of the Meadowspot Path on the 11th of December, after its closure due to the landslip from the Craighouse development. The path is an important thoroughfare to and through Easter Craiglockhart Hill, especially from those approaching from the eastern side of the hill. We expect a further short closure in due course for the removal of a potentially dangerous tree, after which, there will be a replanting programme to reinvigorate the woodland around the site of the works. Currently the path remains open, but look out for this forthcoming temporary closure.



We are also happy to report that the planned extension to the Hilltop Path has now been completed. This work was undertaken to address the particularly muddy and treacherous section at the top of the original path. There have been two new sections of steps added, and a connecting section of path over the previously muddy part. The path now finishes on the hilltop meadow, and we hope this extension will improve access and address safety concerns.

Swan Watch



As many of you will know, there has been turmoil amongst the swans recently as a newcomer 'Tullius' has arrived from the Union Canal. His mate 'Penelope' was sadly killed in November after being hit by a car whilst attempting to chase off her cygnets. Tullius has wasted no time in trying to find a new mate and has successfully challenged Siegfried for dominance of Craiglockhart Pond. Brigid seems to have taken to Tullius and they conspire to bully and chase Siegfried pretty constantly. Poor Siegfried finds it hard to get a moments peace and has been beaten up by the new power couple several times. He was recently moved, we think by the SSPCA, to St. Margarets Loch in Holyrood Park, for his own safety. However, he's valiantly proving that he's not that easy to get rid of, and has stubbornly returned to Craiglockhart, where his cygnets remain, and where his faithless ex-mate Brigid continues to canoodle with Tullius.

Five cygnets watch on wondering if anyone is going to chase them off this year, one having already flown the nest and gone off to seek his fortune in the big wide world. It must be confusing for the others, not least because Tullius periodically disappears, we think in an attempt to entice the reticent Brighid back to the canal. When this happens, Brighid and Siegfried go back to playing happy families! It seems Siegfried won't chase off the cygnets while he is being bullied himself, and Tullius won't assume step-dad duties while Siegfried is still there. It can be confusing for human observers too so please ensure correct identification before reporting any swan-related incidents. Siegfried is tagged **TIH**, Tullius **TTS**, and Brighid **NUU**. This whole affair is very unusual behaviour for swans, so we watch with interest -hoping the situation will be resolved in time for breeding season.

Wildlife Update

As well as the drama surrounding the swan love-triangle, there has been plenty of other wildlife action observed on the hill in recent months. As mentioned earlier, the clearing of the pond outlet stream and the creation of small pools there, has encouraged a beautiful kingfisher to frequent the area, and we hope the pools will also encourage a wider variety of aquatic and amphibious species in the coming months. This is also the aim of the dry barrier hedge next to the swamp; to keep dogs from invading the area and disrupting wildlife - and to prevent swamp-stink coming home with them!



We have had reports of some other interesting birds around the LNR too. There has been plenty of sightings of Kestrels and Buzzards near the hilltop, and a fairly uncommon Water Rail was spotted as it passed through on its migratory path. We've also finally located our elusive resident Tawny Owls, thanks to Katie B! They can be spotted in the trees above Happy Valley Way, between the tennis centre and the entrance to the Glenlockhart path. Katie also reported what could've been a Sparrow Hawk or a Peregrine Falcon, swooping in to take a wood pigeon out of the sky above the Zig-Zag Path (the pigeon got away!).

Finally, we've had plenty of footage from our wildlife cameras, which are positioned and monitored by Jim H. There has been the usual Fox, Roe Deer, and Badger activity in various undisclosed places, but never far from the prying eyes of humans (and noses of dogs!). Keep your eyes open out there and see what you can see, we'd love to hear about it, so do report interesting sightings and send in your photos and videos.



Volunteering Update

Volunteering can often be more challenging over the autumn and winter months, as the nights draw in, the wind whips up, and the temperature drops. Nevertheless, we'd like to thank all of our intrepid volunteers who have kept going throughout this period, contributing many hours of their own time and a great deal of effort, to keep Easter Craiglockhart Hill looking beautiful. During the last few months, we've been working on various projects and on-going tasks around the LNR with our Duke of Edinburgh award scheme participants, and our Hill Work Squad Volunteers.

Some of our achievements include; continuous litter picking, path clearing and scraping, drainage maintenance, removal of invasive vegetation and the construction of a dry barrier with the cuttings - to prevent dogs invading the swamp. We have coppiced our willow features and augmented the willow tunnel at the Craiglockhart Terrace entrance so that hopefully it 'takes' properly in the Spring. We have planted and mapped a variety of trees and wildflowers to help increase local biodiversity and create habitats for pollinators, and created small pools in the pond outflow stream - which immediately facilitated the arrival of a beautiful kingfisher, and the discovery of at least two species of crustaceans!

Thanks too to all Volunteer from Home participants who have been caring for our young saplings and wildflowers - it'll soon be time for a Plant Out! And to everyone who has been conducting individual Hill Patrols in their own time, and submitting Patrol Logs with valuable data about wildlife, human use of the LNR, and other issues. All of these data are greatly appreciated and are being logged for future reference, please keep it up!

We're all looking forward to the Spring and Summer months when the pond and woodland burst into life, to observe some of the fruits of our labour, with a plethora of colourful wildflowers and hopefully an increased array of pollinators and other wildlife.

If you'd like to get involved in any of our volunteering activities you'd be most welcome! Check out the 'Volunteer' tab on our website

here: <https://www.eastercraiglockharthill.org/volunteer/>

Sessions currently run every Sunday between 2-4pm but feel free to contribute however much time you have, all help is welcome. There will be a range of tasks from fairly gentle to fairly strenuous so something to suit everyone. If you'd like more information and weekly updates on specific tasks e-mail: friends@eastercraiglockharthill.org

Volunteering Options 2023

Volunteering
@
Easter Craiglockhart Hill

All New Options!

- 1 HILL PATROL
- 2 HILL WORK SQUAD
- 3 COMMUNITY ADOPTION
- 4 VOLUNTEER FROM HOME



friends@eastercraiglockhartill.org





Our volunteering options are designed to allow people to engage to the degree that suits their lifestyle and means. Whether regular or occasional, individual or in a group, on-site or at home. We have an option that suits you.

There are four main options choose from, check them out [here](#)

In Focus: Option 1 - Hill Patrol

We still need more people to conduct regular Patrols and feedback data. Hill Patrolling is designed to be incorporated into your current routine - so you can do a Patrol whilst going for a walk, run, cycle, whatever. It is very quick and easy, and requires no specialist skills. You simply visit the LNR, take a wee note of what you see, and complete a quick Patrol Log when you get home. Data from Patrol Logs will be stored by FECH and used to paint a picture of

park usage, wildlife diversity, and issues such as vandalism, fires, litter etc. We can then use this to help direct Human Resources and funding to the most needed areas and issues. The aim is to create lasting historical records about on-goings in the park which will be useful and interesting for future generations.

Please get involved, the more data we can collect, the clearer the picture becomes! Look out for on-line training events, or come to one of our walk-rounds.

[View Patrol Log document here](#)

First ever FECH Plant Sale

Keep a look out for information on our forthcoming plant sale which will take place in May! Our Seeds and Planting Co-ordinator Erin has been gathering a cohort of enthusiastic volunteers to help with organising the event, and with producing plants to sell and raise funds for future planting endeavours. We hope to provide a range of bedding plants, perennials, small trees, herbs, and fruit & veg. If you'd like to get involved in any capacity, please e-mail:

friends@eastercraiglockharthill.org

Plant donations are also gratefully accepted.

New Trustees

Our trustees guide and shape the work of the Friends Group. Most have a special area of interest or expertise. We are looking to bring new trustees into our Board. We are looking for:

- People with social media skills, one of whom might act as a Membership Secretary, informing and supporting our members.
- People with experience of income generation and fundraising.

- People living on the eastern side of the hill in Morningside, Craighouse, Meadowspot, or Greenbank, who could represent the interests of those communities.
- People with special interests in wildlife and biodiversity
- People who love Easter Craiglockhart Hill and want to protect it and help make it even lovelier.

If you fit into any of these categories and would like to help the work of our Friends Group, please contact us and we can discuss what is involved in being a trustee.

Forthcoming Events

In addition to our inaugural **Plant Sale** in May, keep an eye out for details of other events we are planning to run this spring and summer. We are hoping to facilitate repeats of our hugely popular **Foraging & Fungi Identification Walks**, and host the second annual FECH **Easter egg Hunt**, and if the drama at the pond ever subsides, our popular **Cygnets Countdown** competition. Keep up to date with our social media channels for event confirmations and information on dates and ticketing.
