



Laurie Campbell

The Sandman lends a hand !

Volunteers helping sand martins...in October?!

Work never stops on the Reserve, even with several feet of snow on the ground. In fact we were getting ready for the arrival of one of our summer migrants as early as the end of October.

Visitors to the Centre can't fail to notice the large, peach coloured wall in the grounds. This is an artificial sand martin bank which this year was home to a small colony of around 20 pairs of these fantastic sandy brown birds.

Each year, when the sand martins return to Montrose they go into a hole in the wall and excavate a new tunnel and nest chamber in which they lay 4-5 eggs. As the birds dig away the sand in the bank is pushed out of the holes.

Over time the amount of sand decreases, the level of sand drops and every three years or so

requires topping up.

This year, Aggregate Industries at Edzell very kindly donated the sand needed for us to replenish the bank, as well as sending along two employees to help out.

Additionally on the day we had a strong team of staff and volunteers who managed to pull back the grass covering, collapse the old nest chambers (to kill any wee bugs or beasties) and move all 3 tonnes of sand by hand from the car park to top-up the bank.

It was fantastic to get the job finished in a day and once the weather improves we will give the wall face a spruce up and a paint. We'll then just have to await the arrival of the birds in March.

Did you know? Sand martins only live for 2 years, however, the oldest ever recorded was 7 years, 11 months and 12 days old.

(www.bto.org)



Surveys & Monitoring Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

The WeBS is carried out at Montrose once a month by a dedicated team of volunteers.

Results from all WeBS counts carried out at Montrose can be viewed online by visiting the information store on the LNR website www.montrosebasin.org.uk

During the WeBS count on 7th November, over 9300 water birds were recorded on the reserve. Below is a short list of the most numerous species counted:

Wigeon	3,595	Dunlin	392
Eider	1,042	Curlew	356
Redshank	985	Mute swan	223
Shelduck	844	Mallard	120
Oystercatcher	685	Scaup	77
Knot	447	Herring gull	59

Dates for 2011 WeBS at Montrose:

16 th January	17 th July
20 th February	14 th August
20 th March	11 th September
17 th April	9 th October
15 th May	27 th November
12 th June	11 th December

For more info. on WeBS, visit <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs>



Reserve Rarities

A Ross's goose was recorded feeding with a flock of pink-feet on stubble fields near the Basin and it was subsequently recorded roosting on the reserve on 5th October. This was only the second record of this species on the basin.

As with most of the UK, we did not escape the invasion of waxwings and although there were large flocks of several hundred seen feeding in the town and Rossie Mills, only small flocks of 35 (2nd Nov) and 30 (14 Nov) were seen from the reserve.

The most exciting sighting on the reserve recently was a bearded tit, which was seen in the Drum reedbed near the Shelduck Hide on 15th November by a visiting RSPB warden from Vane Farm near Edinburgh.

Keep up to date with reserve sightings by following the monthly Ranger Blog which can be found by visiting the reserve page for Montrose Basin on the Scottish Wildlife Trust website - www.swt.org.uk



Goose breakfasts 2010

The two Goose Breakfast events on the 3rd and 17th of October were attended by 148 people this year. The events are proving so popular, that next year we will be putting on three Goose Breakfasts, so book early to secure your place and witness the amazing sight of over 60,000 pink-footed geese taking off against the morning sunrise.

Birding with a brew

We've found you a perfect way to spend a day at Montrose Basin Visitor Centre - due to popular demand we have devoted an area of the Centre to our new "café style" seating area. Now visitors can chill out and enjoy a cup of freshly ground fair trade coffee, cappuccino or hot chocolate. We also have added some delicious muffin cakes and biscuits for you to tuck into while sitting back enjoying the spectacular views across the Montrose Basin. Your birdwatching is right beside you as the new bar stools at the viewing windows enable you to birdwatch at the same time!

Wildlife webcams go live!

Visitors can now keep up to date with happenings on the Reserve by logging onto www.swt.org.uk and viewing our live webcams.

The new Montrose Basin Reserve **webcam 1** allows you to watch footage on the high tide wader roost at Rossie Spit with oystercatchers, knot, dunlin and godwits.

Webcam 2 allows visitors to take control of the cameras and choose which area of the Reserve they would like to view including; sandmartin bank, feeding stations or across the Basin. With all this bad weather why miss out on your daily bird watching; if you can't make it up to the Centre on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday this is your ideal way to do some birdwatching in comfort of your own home.



I would like to introduce everyone to Niall Currie, the latest member of staff to join us here at Montrose Basin. Niall is on a six-month contract and will be working both in the Visitor Centre and on the reserve.

New staff member

As you can see from the photograph, he's already been getting stuck in, helping the Tay Ringing Group with the North-east Scotland twite project, so I have a feeling he'll fit in well with the team.

Thank you to all our fantastic volunteers

The staff at Montrose Basin would like to thank all of our volunteers for their hard work and support throughout 2010. Quite honestly, the reserve and Visitor Centre would not be able to function without the efforts put in by you all and we look forward to your continued support next year. We hope you have a wonderful Christmas and a very happy 2011.



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