

Welcome to the Birnie and Gaddon Lochs LNR Newsletter

A very cold and frosty turn of the year has seen both Birnie and Gaddon largely frozen over. As always at this time of year, please don't venture onto the ice – it isn't always as thick as you think!

Also, remember that the wintering birds on the water may feel vulnerable, as they don't have a lot of open water to move around on, so be careful not to get too close as it will cause them to fly, wasting precious energy. Take a pair of binoculars and watch them from afar.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) Counts 11/12/2020

Birnie Loch (8:43)

Moorhen x 10, Goldeneye x 5,
Mute Swan x 2 (3 x immature), 2
x Mallard, 2 x Tufted Duck, 2 x
Carrion Crow

Gaddon Loch (9:09)

Wigeon x 39, Goosander x 20,
Tufted Duck x 17, Goldeneye x 6,
Mallard x 5, Grey Heron x 4,
Cormorant x 4, Black-headed Gull
x 3, Mute Swan x 2 (1 x
immature), Coot x 2,
Moorhen x 2

Bird of the Month teaser Whose footprints are these?



Snow is a great thing for helping track animals; the soft texture allows for a very distinct impression of the feet of whoever is in the vicinity. When trying to identify the creature it is always good to make a few notes and take some photos.

Measure the size of the prints, or use something of known size for scale (e.g. penknife); measure the distance between the prints (stride length), and look at the pattern formed by the tracks (gait) – are they side-by-side or, like the photo, in an almost straight line. The freshness of the print can be worked out, by comparing it with others – look at your own footprints and see how the crispness of the edges and the patterns on the sole looks compared to an older shoe print, which may have faded or frosted over again.

By putting all these small pieces of information together it is possible to work out, not only where the animal has been, but also how quickly it was moving, how long ago it was there, and sometimes even which individual it was, if it has a unique gait (e.g. limp from an old injury).

The prints above are about 11cm long. I'll give the answer next month. Happy tracking!

NO FISHING

There is **no fishing**, **no swimming**, and **no boating** allowed. **Please report incidents to ourselves and Police Scotland 101.**

Wildlife Records

Please remember to note down the wildlife you see and contact us via the details given below or on ask.us@fifecountryside.co.uk. The Fife Nature Records Centre are also be happy to take details of any wildlife sightings you have from B&G, contact them at nature.info@fife.gov.uk, or use the recording form by searching for them online.

Feeding the Ducks

You can bring seeds, oats, or peas and corn (defrosted if frozen) if you wish. **DO NOT bring bread**, as it pollutes the water and is bad for the birds' health. Thank you.

Accessing the Hides Please be aware that the hides are temporarily closed

