



Newsletter

Spring 2024 Volume 20 Issue 1

Email: friendsofcammo@yahoo.co.uk

Autumn/Winter Roundup

The Wetland

The wetland continues to develop with the plants spreading and consolidating. There is more and more frog and toad spawn every year. For these amphibians, the warm shallow wetland will be a better breeding site than the colder, more shaded canal so it seems they are switching. The populations are also definitely increasing.

Birds feeding in the pool include two herons and, occasionally, two kingfishers. The moorhens and mallards should breed this year, and to lend a hand we have put in a small duck house. This was a lovely gift from Helen and Fraser Smith.

A new grille will soon be fitted to the outlet pipe to stop it blocking as it tends to currently.

The wetland and boardwalk are still used and enjoyed by many visitors to the park.



In and Around the Park

Once again, Christmas trees were dropped off at the park entrances and the Friends did a good job of distributing them around the newer trees to protect them and to create enclosed habitat areas.



We have continued to have tree surgeons bring woodchip, brash and logs into the park. We use the woodchip to reduce the muddiness on the paths and in the area used by the Forest Kindergarten, and also to mulch round the trees we have planted.

The logs and brash are used to create habitat piles for insects and amphibians. Along with the Christmas trees, they provide little islands of cover in the fields.

Bumblebee Monitoring

We are delighted to announce that a BeeWalk survey has been revived at Cammo, to complement our Butterfly Monitoring Citizen Science project. Originally created in 2015, the 2Km survey involves walking a fixed route monthly between March and October and identifying the type and numbers of Bumblebees seen. Huw Pennell, a volunteer with The Bumblebee Conservation Trust, has taken on its responsibility, which will be part of The National BeeWalk Recording Scheme. As with the Butterfly Monitoring, there are two other BeeWalks in the area at Corstorphine Hill and Lauriston Farm thus providing us with a mini network of recording sites in North West Edinburgh.

There are around 270 species of bees in the UK of which 24 are Bumblebees. A Bumblebee (Latin name *Bombus*- meaning 'Booming') is a 'Social Bee' and one of our critical pollinators, 12 times as efficient at pollination / fertilisation than a honeybee. Unlike the honeybee, bumblebees do not make honey, as they do not need to store food for winter. Instead, the season's new Queens hibernate and emerge to find their own nests in the spring.

These Queens are the Bumblebees that we will be seeing at Cammo and in your own gardens at this time of year. They can be seen flying low to the ground busy searching for suitable nest sites, usually abandoned mouse and vole nests in the vegetation, while looking for nectar to feed from the early flowering plants and trees to help build up their energy on after their long hibernation. The Queen overwinter losses are around 50% so the ones you see flying now are very precious.

Three of the most likely species you will see flying this early are The Buff Tailed Bumblebee (these are the largest species in the UK and classically yellow striped with a buff coloured tail), The Early Bumblebee (suitably named, but much smaller with yellow stripes and orange tail) and the Tree Bumblebee (a relatively recent arrival to the UK, three coloured - ginger, black and white).



Tree Bumblebee



Buff Tailed Bumblebee

Butterfly Monitoring

Volunteers are about to start the weekly walk around Cammo to record butterflies. This important citizen science helps the Butterfly Conservation and the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme to collate data on butterfly abundance and diversity. Eggs of the Purple Hairstreak have been found in the park in recent weeks. This is a rare sighting for a species that is spreading its coverage further north from Southern Scotland. We hope to sight the butterfly later in the season although they tend to stick to the canopies of oak trees. We are seeking additional volunteers. It involves a walk of less than an hour around the park once a week and there is a rota such that you don't need to do the walk every week. Training will be provided. Please contact Michael Roe on 07881 637370



Birds

It looks very much as if our resident tawny owls are breeding again this year, as will the buzzards. A new addition has been a male kestrel. He has been calling for a mate for months and eventually one arrived. It would be remarkable if we can get a family of this small falcon in a public park on the edge of such a big city. Fingers crossed.

The Walled Garden

The Walled Garden gardening group continue to maintain the flower beds they have created. The fruit trees were pruned this winter so there should be lots of blossom and then fruit in the autumn.

Few Flowered Leek

On Wednesday 3rd April, in pouring rain, four hardy Friends' volunteers removed two large patches of few flowered leek (FFL) from the walled garden in Cammo.

FFL is an invasive, non-native plant that has colonised huge areas of Edinburgh including the River Almond walkway and Corstorphine Hill amongst others. It spreads very rapidly and out-competes our native, spring flowers (snowdrops, bluebells and wood anemone.)

We have been working for years to keep FFL from dominating in Cammo. It comes in along the Bughtlin burn and across Cammo Road along the boundary above the North car park. People confuse it with the native wild garlic.



Few flowered leek



Wild garlic

Volunteer Groups

On February 11th we supervised The Dirty Weekend, a volunteer group from Edinburgh University. About sixteen people showed up and they moved all the woodchip from behind the old house into the Kindergarten area, as well weeding some of the young trees.

Two weeks later we were delighted to welcome twelve NatWest volunteers. They helped us secure the stones in the stream to improve the flow and efficiency of the water flowing into the wetland. They shovelled and barrowed several piles of wood chip onto paths to make it more pleasant for walking. They also helped by clearing grass and weeds around some of the young trees to allow them more access to sun light and nutrients. The NatWest team made a significant positive impact in just a few hours and we are very grateful to them.

We have two more volunteer groups planned for later in the year.

If you know of a company who may like to get involved with a Cammo volunteer day please reply in the comments or email us at friendsofcammo@yahoo.co.uk

Boundaries and Structures

In terms of built structures in Cammo, wall repairs have been carried out recently and there will be consolidatory work happening to the stables and the ruins behind them, and the walled garden in the near future. There is also to be a new entrance off Cammo Walk so that residents of the new Maybury development "Cammo Meadows" can get into the park more easily. The Friends are also working with the council to replace the map boards at the entrances.

Stop Press - Stop Press - Stop Press



Our new website is live!!!

The original Friends of Cammo website was created for us by Royal High Six-Formers as a project and it has served us very well since 2019. But a lot of work has gone into updating it - and it has just gone live! We hope you like it!

<https://www.friendsofcammo.org/>

Other News

Friends of Cammo Committee

Nick has resigned as Chairman of the Friends because he will be moving from Edinburgh. Bruce Angus was elected at the last meeting to take over this role. Other Committee members have remained in their roles and Barbara Braham has joined the Committee, which is very welcome.

Nick will continue to be involved until he leaves - and possibly even after that! (And you thought you'd get rid of him! Ha! Ed.) We are fortunate that several groups of volunteers from the Friends have taken on responsibility for the various elements of the work we do, so the future care of the park is assured.

Committee member, Michael Roe, will be taking over as Editor of the Newsletter from Annie Bengel starting with the Autumn issue later this year.

Cammo Lodge continues to be opened as a visitor centre on Sunday afternoons 2pm-4pm, thanks to the rota of volunteers organised by Joanna Morris. Access to the Lodge toilets is also available whenever the Leaf & Bean van is operating.

Dates for the next Ordinary General Meetings – 5th June, 4th September and 4th December 2024.

Membership

Once again, it is time to make your annual subscription payment to Friends of Cammo. For those with a standing order in place, no action is required. Others have received information by email about how to renew membership and alternative payment methods. Prompt payment is appreciated. Funds go towards the work the Friends do to maintain and enhance the park.

There is lots going on, and the park continues to be a wonderful place both for wildlife and for people.

And don't forget to ...

*Look out for the swallows!
They should be arriving on April 19th!!!*

