

John Muir Way project

One of America's most celebrated heroes, John Muir was an exceptional naturalist, explorer, mountaineer, botanist, writer and pioneer of conservation. But did you know that he was a Scot and that it was in Scotland he first fell in love with nature? Scottish Natural Heritage awarded Friends of Lenzie Moss a grant, to run a project as part of their celebration of the first John Muir Festival, and the opening of the John Muir Way on April 21 this year.

John Muir realised the importance of the public's 'growing interest in the care and preservation of forests and wild places in general, and in the half wild parks and gardens of towns'. Lenzie Moss has been saved from continued drainage and degradation and housing projects, and was a perfect place to celebrate and explore in John Muir's name. The John Muir Way also passes close to Lenzie Moss, along the canal towpath in Kirkintilloch.

The theme of our project was 24 hours on Lenzie Moss. To explore the Moss at dawn, a ranger-led guided walk took place around Lenzie Moss and on the paths that lead to the John Muir Way. We looked for and listened to the early morning wildlife, especially enjoying the bird song. At the other end of the day, to contrast the Moss at dusk, another ranger led guided walk took place. Using duckboards, we were able to cross the middle of the peat bog. We were able to view the new dams and the water level monitoring devices up close. These will give a better picture of how the Moss' water level changes over time. Some small mammal traps were set, and one of these produced a field mouse (released after being examined by inquisitive humans!). Both these walks were busy, and attracted both local people and people who have not been to the LNR before.

To complete the theme of 24 hours, two photographic activities took place.

For daytime, we advertised throughout East Dunbartonshire and asked for photographs and experiences of Lenzie Moss to be sent to us. We received over 100 photographs, with some stunning photographs of wildlife, panoramas, people and their dogs ! The photographs were displayed at our AGM, and can be viewed on an online photo album, with the link for this being available on our website.

To round off the 24 hour theme, night time had to be considered. The SNH grant allowed us to purchase a night vision wildlife camera. This was used to capture images of the wildlife inhabitants of the Moss during the hours of darkness, including the timid deer.

With so many fantastic photographs, we were keen to be able to show these to as wide an audience as possible. We were fortunate to receive a further grant from EDC's Community Grants Scheme, to fund the purchase of portable displays. Our intention is to exhibit these in local schools, community hubs, and at local events.

We would like to thank SNH and the Community Grants scheme for their support in funding this project, which will have ongoing benefits for promotion of the Local Nature Reserve and future events.