

Awards for Huntly groups

By Pat Scott

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TREE-planting at the community farm Greenmyres and Huntly's Swift group were among the recipients of the North East Biodiversity Partnership's Champion Awards.

The awards were instigated to challenge the attitude that the decline in wildlife was "too big" or "too difficult" to tackle.

The awards, presented virtually demonstrate that lots of small actions added together do make a difference.

More than 6500 trees have been planted at Greenmyres, since it was bought by Huntly Development Trust.

The species of the trees were chosen to promote the best biodiversity.

Native trees which have self seeded around the large pond have been protected by the removal of non native sitka spruce trees which were crowding out the other trees.

Greenmyres' biodiversity champion, Mary Scott said: "We had a new pond dug in January last year and by the spring it had attracted toad spawn, frogs and newts along



Volunteers from Deveron Projects helped with weeding at Greenmyres.

with pond insects.

"The intention is that this pond will be used for pond dipping and we plan to have a path going to this pond with more trees to enhance the site.

"The main focus for tree planting lately was the beech hedge at the car park but it got really overgrown during lockdown so we spent far more time weeding than planting.

"A large number of native wild flowers have been planted on the site around the ponds and car park

to attract insects and beautify the site."

Cally Smith established the Huntly and District Swift Group after discovering the plight of the Common Swift and has raised the profile of the migrant birds which arrive each summer hugely.

In May 2017, she surveyed around Huntly to see where local swifts were nesting and then decided to see if there were other people locally that would want to help.



Cally Smith founded the successful Huntly Swift Group.

She said: "I organised Swift walks throughout the breeding season to tell people about these fabulous birds and in doing so I gathered a following of people eager to get involved, and so about a year later the group was formed.

"The group is dedicated to helping care for and protect Huntly's Swift population for future generations.

"No-one really knew where the swifts were nesting but now we have identified over sixty active nest sites we can, as our first priority, try to protect them and then hope to add yet more nesting opportunities within these locations.

"There are ways to help the swifts, firstly by keeping existing nest sites open, installing swift bricks into new builds and renovations and lastly by putting up boxes."

The group has some swift nesting boxes available by donation for anyone who wants to help the species and will always be happy to offer advice.

The group is pressing for swifts and other species to be included in council action plans to protect biodiversity.

Huntly and District Swift Group can be contacted via its Facebook page or calling Cally on 07411 808573.

Beth and Roger Polson from Knock Farm, received an award for their work to improve the environment.

The farm includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest and farming methods have played a key role in helping to maintain the site.

The Bin Rangers nature group also received an award.



WILLOWS ANIMAL SANCTUARY

As many of you already know, this awful pandemic forced us to close last year and we have lost over half of our monthly income ever since. Reopening to the public is still way off, and it's very clear that we need another big push on getting more animal sponsors and Lifeline members in order for Willows to stay afloat. Lots of people have cancelled their support because of the financial climate (which is totally understandable) and we've not had many people sign up to compensate. Even if it's only £3 per month it's makes such a big difference as it's an income we count on. The world feels very uncertain and we have so many amazing animals in the charity's care that need sponsorship.

If you can help at all please see our website for more details:

www.willowsanimals.com

