

Urban Biodiversity: Successes and Challenges: Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre

Stephen Owen

Scottish Wildlife Trust, Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre,
Wood Street, Grangemouth, FK3 8LH
E-mail: jupiterranger@swt.org.uk

Scottish Wildlife Trust's Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre is situated in the middle of Grangemouth. The 4 hectares are leased from the chemical company Calachem. It is a fine example of land reclamation for nature conservation. In 1989, the chemical giant ICI approached SWT regarding setting up a demonstration wildlife garden on an abandoned part of their Grangemouth site. This area had been a railway siding. Upon acquisition, it was covered in a mixture of sparse grassland, scattered scrub and marshy areas. Jupiter was opened to the public in 1992.

Jupiter can be divided into three areas; wildlife gardens, habitat creation area and "wilderness woodland." The habitat creation area and wildlife gardens contain complex habitat mosaics often with unusual combinations of species, due to their interesting history, with some species having been present when the area was wasteland, the deliberate creation of certain habitats and a combination of active management and natural succession over the succeeding years.

The wildlife gardens show ideas for creating wildlife friendly spaces. The habitat creation area consists of a number of habitats with artificial origins: wetlands, wildflower rich grasslands and small woodlands. The regenerated "wilderness" woodland is an excellent example of the potential of wasteland if allowed to develop on its own.

Thanks to the rich array of habitats and careful management work, Jupiter supports a wealth of biodiversity. Over 360 species of flowering plant have been recorded and attract many invertebrates. There are records of over 50 species of bird. Mammals are more rarely seen, although some species have been recorded. The ponds support breeding populations of amphibians.

Jupiter is also an important place for people. Curriculum linked education sessions, public events programmes, and volunteering are all popular. SWT's partner organisation at Jupiter, BTCV Scotland, runs a Wildflower Nursery and a Green Gym. Secondary schools have been involved in exciting projects, designing and creating mosaics, murals and an outdoor classroom.