

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate use: Monday 24 January 2005



Wet weekend planned at Montrose Basin?

Scottish Wildlife Trust's (SWT) Montrose Basin Wildlife Centre in Angus is celebrating *World Wetlands Day* with a weekend of activities to enjoy. On *Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 January 2005* there is the chance to go mud mad with a children's activity exploring the Basin. For the adults, a guided walk will take place along the river with expert advice on-hand.

Each year *World Wetlands Day* aims to raise awareness of the benefits of wetland habitats and marks the signing of the United Nation's Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in Ramsar (Iran). The Convention recognised the importance of global wetland habitats and instigated a new international co-operation for the conservation of wetlands. This included a list of those designated as internationally important wetlands, known as Ramsar sites. Today there are over 1,401 Ramsar designated wetland sites of which 159 exist in the United Kingdom including at Montrose Basin, along with another four SWT reserves. Events now take place all over the world to celebrate wetlands with special activities giving an insight into these distinctive habitats and the life that depends on them.

As Karen van Eeden (SWT's conservation manager for Angus and Dundee) said, wetland habitats can be taken for granted in Scotland, yet they provide important areas for a large number of species: "*World Wetlands Day helps to raise understanding of the need to conserve and use these habitats in a sustainable way. They provide a home to many species, including to over 50,000 migratory birds each year at Montrose and through activities such as the ones planned over this coming weekend, we try to enthuse and excite the public about what we often take for granted.*"

Montrose Basin covers a 750 hectare area of enclosed estuary of the South Esk. A daily tidal cycle brings in a rich soup of nutrients making it a haven for pink-footed geese from Iceland and Greenland, common eels swimming across the Atlantic from the Sargasso Sea, knots on their way from Siberia to West Africa, salmon traveling thousands of miles from Arctic Canada and Greenland and sedge warblers which return to the Basin in late spring after wintering in West Africa.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Karen van Eeden, SWT's conservation manager for Angus and Dundee is available for interview.
2. There are two events being run as part of *World Wetlands Day* celebrations; on Saturday 29 January join the fun with Mud Madness at 10.30 am (until 12 noon). Suitable for children up to 12 years old (please note, under eights must have accompanying adult supervision) and costs £1.50. Old clothes and wellies are essential. Meet at Montrose Basin Wildlife Centre. On Sunday 30 January at 1.30 pm (until 3.00 pm) there will be a guided walk along the river on led by Angus Council ranger Richard Averiss. Meeting at the Old Montrose Pier Car Park. This event is free.
3. For more information on the Convention on Wetlands and Ramsar sites, visit: www.ramsar.org SWT's head of conservation, Stuart Brooks is a member of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel who jointly are developing a global action plan for the protection of peatlands, a habitat covered by the Ramsar convention.
4. Montrose Basin Wildlife Centre is on the A92 Montrose to Arbroath road just one mile south of Montrose. Follow the brown signs to *Montrose Basin Wildlife Centre*. Free parking. Admission is: £2.50, concession/student £1.50, family £5.00, groups of 10 or more £1.00. Open daily from 10.30 pm–4.00 pm from November–March).
5. SWT is the largest voluntary body working for the wildlife of Scotland; it represents more than 26,000 members who care for wildlife and the environment. SWT seeks to raise public awareness of threatened habitats and species and manages more than 120 reserves Scotland-wide.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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