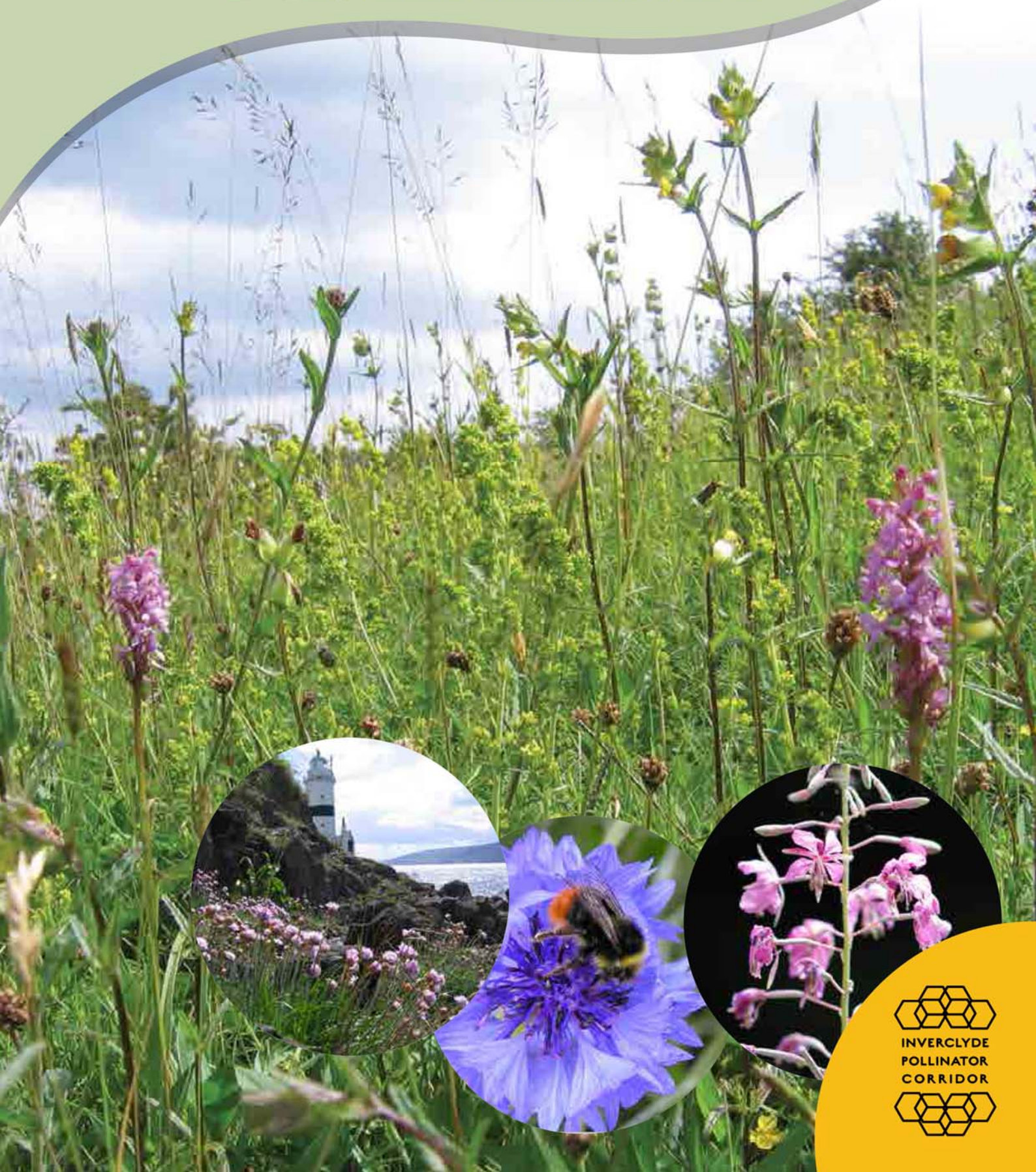


TAKE A WEE WALK ON THE **WILDSIDE**

A guide to Inverclyde's Beautiful Nature Walks



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Seán Batty Weather Forecaster



From doing a lot of walking and cycling along the Clyde over the years for the STV Children's Appeal, I've become more connected to our local surroundings and the nature within it. We have a beautiful landscape, which we've got to protect and preserve along with our wildflowers to allow our nature to thrive and flourish.

In my work as a meteorologist, I know the challenges presented by climate change and our sometimes volatile weather changes, particularly to our pollinators such as bees. I'm keen to do my bit by including some bee-friendly plants in my own garden and learning more about the work of the Inverclyde Pollinator Corridor, who are planting up patches of wild flowers across Inverclyde to help save pollinators.

This guide will help you to find some of the best easy family walks in Inverclyde and the beautiful nature you might spot as you stroll.

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COASTAL

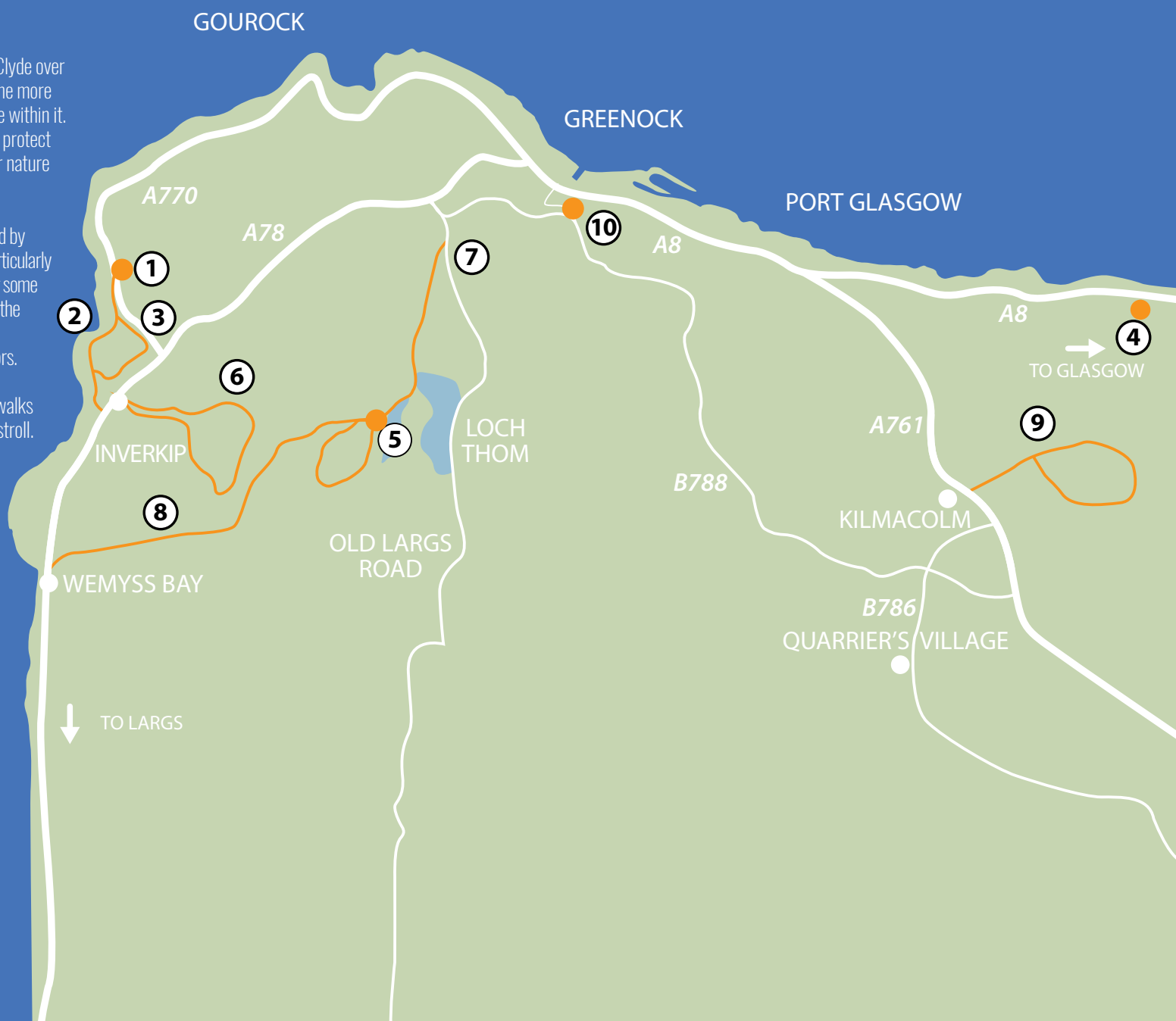
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Coastal Scenery & Wetland Wildlife: Clyde Estuary



Oystercatcher



Cormorant

The Clyde Estuary stretches around the coastline of Inverclyde, from Port Glasgow as far as Wemyss Bay on the border of North Ayrshire, providing a large coastal wetland habitat for wildlife, especially bird species.

Approximately 4 miles south of Gourock following the coastline, **① Lunderston Bay** provides a spectacular site to view wildlife; with open areas of untouched coastline, as well as gorgeous views of the River Clyde and the Cowal Peninsula. In spring and summer, gannets can be seen diving for food near the bay as they return to the Ailsa Craig nesting site. Coming into the summer months, young wading birds such as curlews and oystercatchers can be spotted learning how to feed on shellfish and lugworms on the sands. In winter, grebes, divers and other wildfowl can be found in numbers on the shoreline. Continuing south of Lunderston Bay, is a section of the

② Inverclyde Coastal Trail (National Route 753) which stretches south along this beautiful coastline towards Inverkip Marina, bordering the mixed woodland of Ardgowan Estate and providing opportunities to spot wildlife such as grey seals, red shanks, cormorants and herons. As the path makes it's way past the Ardgowan Estate's woodland, wild flowers such as butterburr, sea aster and sea thrift can be seen.

Access: Park at Lunderston Bay. Nearest train station: Inverkip

How hard is it? Easy family walk.

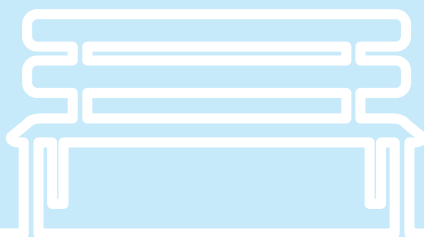
① clydemuirshiel.co.uk sustrans.org.uk



Heron



Butterburr



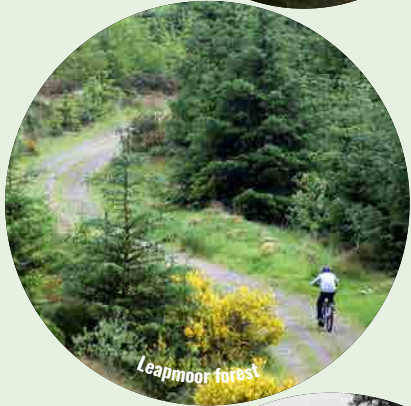
Some of the best Forests and Woods



③ **Ardgowan Estate** contains several trails which make their way through the more heavily wooded areas of the estate, passing the remains of the old walled garden and the Japanese garden. Walking through the mixed wood of native species such as oak, ash and non-native softwood species such as Sitka spruce and Japanese larch, you may hear the distinctive drumming noise of a great spotted woodpecker during spring and summer, or you may catch signs of the many woodland mammal residents such as badgers and roe deer. Areas of open grassland on these routes offer the visitor a chance to enjoy wild flowers such as the millions of snowdrops covering the estate's sloping grounds, especially during January and February.

Access: Park at Inverkip Marina or Lunderston Bay
Nearest train station: Inverkip
How hard is it? Easy family walk, can be muddy

① ardgowan.co.uk



also known locally as John Knox's Yew. Several trails, lead through the wooded area of the estate, boasting a variety of wild flowers, with snowdrops dominating the forest floor in the winter months and a stunning display of bluebells in late April/May. The well established woodland also offers visitors a chance to view many birds of prey, including kestrels, buzzards and sparrow hawks.

Access: Park at Finlaystone. Nearest train station: Langbank

How hard is it? Easy family walks, can be muddy
Please note there is an admission charge.

① finlaystone.co.uk

Within Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park just off the Greenock Cut Trail and within a short walk of the Visitor Centre is ⑤ **Shielhill Glen Nature Trail**, a 1.5 mile (45 minute) walk through a Site of Special Scientific Interest. This is one of the few areas of easily reachable native broadleaf woodland in Inverclyde. The pathway eventually leads through the woodland and out into the open moorland over raised wooden board walks. This trail is a great spot to observe the natural beauty of the area, weaving between oak, ash and silver birch before coming out on to open moorland, where the walker may have the chance to spy local wildlife such as hen harriers, brown hares and roe deer.

At the other end of Inverclyde just west of Port Glasgow, ④ **Finlaystone Country Estate** provides another accessible area of natural beauty, just outside of the urban landscape. With 140 acres of woodland, the estate is home to a diverse range of wildlife and natural habitat. The estate is also home to one of the few ancient trees recorded in Inverclyde – an ancient common yew tree,



Access: park at Greenock Cut Visitor Centre,
Nearest train station: Inverkip
How hard is it? Moderate family walk

① clydemuirshiel.co.uk

⑥ **Leapmoor Forest** is a Sitka spruce plantation near the village of Inverkip, and also within Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, providing a relaxing forest walk through towering trees. They are an impressive height, allowing for the chance to spot sparrow hawks flying through the canopy chasing smaller birds. The forest floor is carpeted with moss, giving the woodland a verdant glow. While very close to a built up area, a walk through Leapmoor can be incredibly peaceful.

Access: park on Inverkip High Street, follow signs to Daff Glen. Nearest train station: Inverkip
How hard is it? Moderate family walk (some paths with steep drops).

① clydemuirshiel.co.uk

Birds of prey What did you spot?



A Walk in the Hills: Moorland, Bog and Peatland



Black darter dragonfly



Heather moors, Greenock cut

⑦ The Greenock Cut Hills: a 15 minute stroll from Drumfrochar train station brings you to the end of the Greenock Cut Trail – follow the aqueduct back along its 7.5 mile length to its source near Greenock Cut Visitor Centre. The Greenock Cut trail provides beautiful views over the River Clyde, as well as a chance to experience the abundance of wildlife present on the moorland. In spring, visitors can enjoy the flourishing wildflowers along the Cut, including orchids, dog violets and wood sorrel. Summer welcomes many migrant birds to the area, including osprey, swallows and cuckoos. Insect species thrive in the warmer months, providing food for frogs, toads and common lizards as well as predatorial damselflies and dragonflies which can be found hovering over water in the aqueducts. As we enter autumn, wintering migrants begin to arrive from more northerly climes, including field fares and gold crests. Further into winter, visitors may have a chance of seeing stoats and foxes hunting during the day due to shorter daylight hours.

Access: park with care along the Old Largs Road. Nearest train station: Drumfrochar

How hard is it? Moderate, longer family walk

i clydemuirshiel.co.uk

⑧ The Kelly Cut: a 6 mile linear hike, carries you through a peaceful section of the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park from Wemyss Bay to the Greenock Cut Visitor Centre. This hike provides views of Leapmoor Forest and Daff Reservoir as it winds through the vast peatland and open heather moorland landscape of the Park. The ling heather is a blaze of purple in August and September. As the path approaches the Greenock Cut Visitor Centre, Shielhill Glen opens up before the visitor, showing mixed woodland forest below the path. Much like the Greenock Cut walk, the Kelly Cut offers visitors the opportunity to spot wildlife throughout the seasons. On the open moorland, visitors may get a chance to spot larger bird species such as ospreys or hen harriers as the path nears Daff Reservoir. In spring and summer, hikers may hear the cry of a curlew or the song of a skylark as they return to the hills of Inverclyde to nest.

Access: park at Wemyss Bay station, access to path by caravan park. Nearest train station: Wemyss Bay
How hard is it? Moderate family walk (some paths with steep drops)

i clydemuirshiel.co.uk



Bog asphodel



Green hairstreak



Glen Moss

⑨ Glen Moss, a nature reserve managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, is an idyllic natural haven located just outside the town of Kilmacolm, containing woodland, marshland and open pools of water. The diversity of habitats provides a home for many different species, with visitors being able to catch a glimpse of them from the boardwalks and paths throughout the seasons. Mammals include roe deer and otter, while amphibians, such as the common frog, benefit from the marshland scattered throughout the reserve. This habitat also provides a perfect location for the rare coral root orchid, bog sedge and tufted loosestrife. With four species of dragonfly and five of damselfly, it a great place to spot these aerial acrobats hunting and mating in the summer.

Access: park in Kilmacolm village, cross the Bridge of Weir Road and follow the footpath signs.
How hard is it? Easy family walk (boardwalks over stretches of water)

i scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk



The Greenock Cut

Inverclyde: Stunning by Season

Wildflowers are a good indicator of a healthy ecosystem, providing food for pollinator species such as bumblebees and creating a more colourful experience as you visit the wild areas of Inverclyde. Certain times of the year offer visitors the chance to see these flowers in full bloom. Witness the changing, vibrant colours of each season and forage for delicious and nutritious wild food.

Spring (Mar - Jun)

Gorse/Whin – Coves Reservoir, Kelly Cut, Whinhill
Wild garlic – Ardgowan (forageable)
Primrose – Ardgowan
Bluebells – Finlaystone, Ardgowan
Dog violet – Greenock Cut
Wood anemone – Finlaystone

Summer/Autumn (Aug - Nov)

Sea aster – coastal
Sea buckthorn – coastal (forageable)
Cranberry (forageable)
Devil's bit scabious – Glen Moss
Ling heather – Coves Reservoir, Greenock Cut,
Kelly Cut
Blackberry – commonplace (forageable)

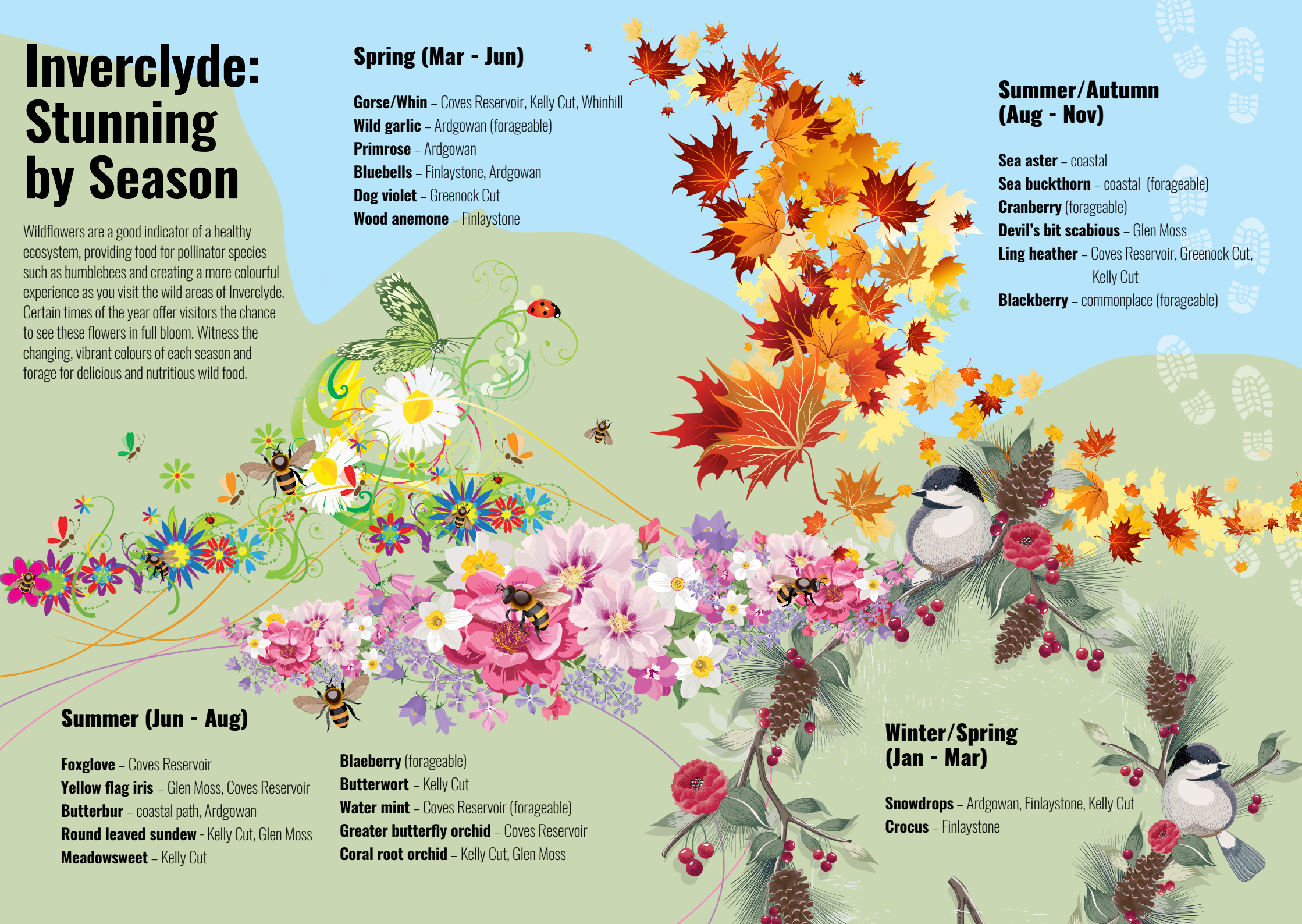
Summer (Jun - Aug)

Foxglove – Coves Reservoir
Yellow flag iris – Glen Moss, Coves Reservoir
Butterbur – coastal path, Ardgowan
Round leaved sundew – Kelly Cut, Glen Moss
Meadowsweet – Kelly Cut

Blaeberry (forageable)
Butterwort – Kelly Cut
Water mint – Coves Reservoir (forageable)
Greater butterfly orchid – Coves Reservoir
Coral root orchid – Kelly Cut, Glen Moss

Winter/Spring (Jan - Mar)

Snowdrops – Ardgowan, Finlaystone, Kelly Cut
Crocus – Finlaystone



Inverclyde's wee Pollinators

Pollinating insects are a vital part of the natural ecosystem which are necessary for the production of honey and pollination of most of our food crops.

Pollinators in Inverclyde include honey bees, bumblebees, wasps, hoverflies, moths, beetles and several butterfly species such as the common blue, holly blue, small copper and green hairstreak.

These insects are present throughout Inverclyde, in gardens and urban parks. Pollinators need wild flowers and other plant species to provide food (nectar and pollen) and places to live. Moreover, to maintain a healthy population, these habitats need to be closely spaced together, no more than one kilometre apart, or the pollinators become geographically isolated.



Common blue



Six-spot burnet moth



What we do

Inverclyde Pollinator Corridor is an ambitious project set up by beekeepers and concerned local residents to ensure the survival of pollinators. Since World War II, 97% of wildflower meadows in the UK have vanished, being used for construction or intensive farming practices. At the Inverclyde Pollinator Corridor, we are trying to establish more of these green spaces in the form of mini wild flower meadows throughout Inverclyde, utilising vacant land and protecting existing pockets of wild flowers, in order to try and replenish some of what has been lost and to improve our local natural heritage.

10 Belville Biodiversity Garden

in Belville Street, Greenock is the flagship mini-meadow for the project, featuring wild flowers, a nectar bar and an impressive cairn. A beautiful space for a stroll and a sit.

To join us or for more information:



@inverclydebuzz

www.inverclydepollinatorcorridor.com

We would like to thank the following for contributing photography:

Clyde Muirshiel Park, Keith Watson Glasgow Museums, Finlaystone Estate, The Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Suzanne Burgess Buglife, Thomas Nugent, Dai-An Craig and Bill Clark.



Beekeeper



Buff-tailed bumblebee

Inverclyde
council



Please enjoy the outdoors responsibly