

2009 Conservation Work Party Report

Members and non members join our conservation work parties. These events take place on John Muir Trust properties and on our partnership properties. Participants arrange their own food, travel and accommodation. These events are designed to enable our members and others to:

- Contribute to the practical work of the John Muir Trust on Trust and partnership properties;
- Learn about the John Muir Trust and partnership properties and how they are managed;
- Practice some of the skills of conservation management;
- Meet other members and John Muir Trust staff;
- Experience and have contact with wild places.

**"Do something for wildness and make the mountains glad"
(John Muir, 1892)**

2009 saw another steady increase in activity by volunteers to help the conservation work of the Trust and its land partners. There were 22 organised work parties compared to the 19 the year before involving 128 volunteers up on the 110 in 2008. As well as the organised work parties, which were one to eight days long, many of the volunteers also took part in the biodiversity monitoring on JMT properties.



What did they achieve?

Work was carried out on all the JMT estates of Sandwood, Quinag, Schiehallion, Nevis, Strathaird, Sconser, Torrin and Li & Coire Dhorrcail. Work parties also visited the properties of the Assynt Foundation, North Harris Trust, Galson Trust and Knoydart Foundation. Most

work parties included a mix of work and a full report of each can be seen on the JMT website. Examples of the work done includes:-

- 90 metres of new paths were constructed on Sconser, Strathaird and Glen Nevis
- Regular maintenance was carried out on over ten miles of paths in Coire Dhorrcail, Glen Nevis, Blaven, Bowglas/Miabhaig, Quinag, Sandwood Bay and Schiehallion
- Beach cleaning was carried out at Sandwood Bay, Sheigra, Dronan, Bàgh Theilnis & Huishinis (North Harris), Cable Bay (Knoydart), Glen Scaladal (Skye) removing the equivalent of around 12 standard skips full to the brim.<
- Mountain rubbish (including cairns) removed in 4 visits to the summit of Ben Nevis
- Woodland work including brash burning and tree fertilizing on Skye & Knoydart
- Eradication of invasive species including rhododendrons on Skye & Knoydart
- Drain blocking to restore peatland in Assynt and turfing to restore high-level areas of eroded vegetation at Schiehallion
- Fence removal in Harris and Glen Nevis and construction of deer jumps in Li & Coire Dhorrcail
- Painting a bird hide and restoring a corn mill on Lewis

The work as part of the JMT Biodiversity project included volunteers recording seventeen woodland transects across our properties as well as regular invertebrate surveys on Schiehallion, water vole & butterfly surveys in Glen Nevis and moth surveys at Sandwood, Quinag and Knoydart and erecting of a fence enclosure at Quinag.

For the second year in a row a group visited a private nature reserve in East Iceland (Skálanes) to volunteer for a week there reinforcing an Eider duck pond and tree planting.



Who comes along?

Over 80% of volunteers are already members of the JMT but of them only 10% had joined recently in 2009 with 57% having joined in the previous 8 years, 30% in the 1990's and 3% as long ago as the 1980's. Around 70% come from Scotland and in this group 46% come from Edinburgh or Glasgow post codes with 20% from PH, 11% from IV and 6% each from the KY, DD & AB postcodes. Of the 30% of volunteers that come from England Wales & beyond over 23 postcode areas are represented the length & breadth of the country. On the work parties the attendance is almost exactly 50:50 male:female with an average of ten people on each activity. We don't ask people what age they are (providing under 18's are accompanied) but I know that we certainly had volunteers from at least 15 to 76 during the year!

Highlights & spin offs

One of the most memorable work parties of the year must be the mass rhoddie bash at Inverie where we contributed 12 of the 50 volunteers who came together to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Knoydart Estate community buyout there. We helped with a big push to remove rhododendrons and had a wonderful time with some of the celebrations including carving a totem pole.

Another highlight included starting the work to restore the old stalkers track on Quinag which has been carried on further this autumn in a contract involving staff from the local Culag Woodland group but will be maintained by JMT volunteers in years to come.

Work parties continued to attract attention from passing hill walkers and the media. The continued problem of the rubbish on Ben Nevis in particular banana skins generated several newspaper articles and radio interviews and a BBC crew filmed a work party on Skye for a Gaelic children's programme. One heartening spin off was the managing director of a company getting chatting to a regular volunteer while they were maintaining the Schiehallion path. This resulted in a sizable cash donation to the Trust as well as the company joining as a corporate sponsor of the JMT!

Thanks

As always the greatest thanks go to the volunteers who give up their time to work organising their own travel, food & accommodation. Also the staff and directors of our various land partners as well as the JMT properties who make the volunteers welcome and ensure that the work is useful as well as interesting.

We would also like to thank several charitable trusts who have supported the work of the JMT work parties during 2009. These include **the Rylkow Charitable Trust 1992, the Leach No.14 Trust and the McCorquodale Charitable Trust.**

Below are the list of all the 2009 work parties with links to reports and pictures of what went on.

Dates of work	Location	Proposed activity	
12th to 14th March	Assynt	Peatland restoration by blocking drains to create bog habitat	report
28th March	Schiehallion	Path maintenance	report
2nd to 4th April	Sandwood	Beach cleaning, path work and general activity	report
11th to 12th April	Strathaird (Skye)	Tree planting on Easter weekend	report
25th & 26th April	Glen Nevis	Transect volunteers group meeting for existing and potential volunteers involved in monitoring on JMT properties	report
1st to 4th May	Quinag	Pathwork (4th is May Day holiday)	report
10th May	Schiehallion	Path maintenance following JMT AGM at Birnam	report
16th & 17th May	Sconser (Skye)	Pathwork	report
22nd to 25th May	Li & Coire Dhorrcail (Knoydart)	Pathwork and general activity (25th is Spring Bank Holiday), <i>this work party involves wild camping in a remote area</i>	report
30th May	Ben Nevis	Summit litter collection and removal of fresh cairns	report
1st to 6th June	North Harris	Beach cleaning, pathwork and fence removal (work party now full but I am taking a reserves list in case people drop out)	report
9th to 12th June	Galson (Lewis)	General activities (included in the week before's activities)	report
20th to 28th June	Inverie (Knoydart)	Rhododendron removing, knotweed eradication and beach cleaning (<i>to coincide with Knoydart Forrest Trust celebrations of their rhoddie bashing programme</i>)	report
27th June	Ben Nevis	Summit litter collection and removal of fresh cairns	report
16th to 19th July	Glen Nevis	Survey work on butterflies, water voles etc and pathwork	report
1st to 3rd August	Schiehallion	Path repairs	report
15th August	Ben Nevis	Summit litter collection and removal of	report

15th/16th August	Glen Nevis	fresh cairns Pathwork close to the Wire Bridge (extra work party)	
27th to 29th August	Sandwood	Pathwork	report
11th to 14th September	Strathaird (Skye)	Rhoddie Bashing, pathwork, woodland work, beach cleaning and general work	report
Saturday 26th September	Ben Nevis	Extra work party to clear rubbish from summit	report
mid September	Skálanes (East Iceland)	For details of last year see the 2008 report of the trip by volunteers from the JMT to Skálanes	2009 report
24th & 25th October	Schiehallion	Path maintenance and an extra day for path repairs	report

Photos by Maggie Tebbs, John Worsnop, Sandy Maxwell