

JOHN MUIR TRUST  
**JOURNAL**

55 AUTUMN 2013

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**The wild  
and the wind**

Protecting wild land – the first step to hope and healing

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wild LAND &  
wild PLACES

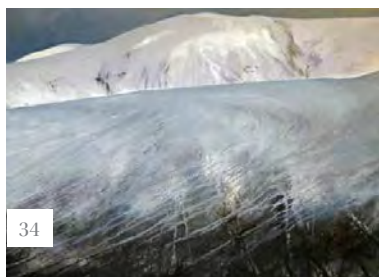


‘Wildness puts us in our place. It reminds us that our plans are small and somewhat absurd. It reminds us why, in those cases in which our plans might influence many future generations, we ought to choose carefully.’

— Barbara Kingsolver, *Small Wonder*

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# From the chief executive

**WELCOME TO THE AUTUMN EDITION** of the John Muir Trust Journal. Once again, we include a wide range of articles, which is as it should be for an organisation that approaches wild land protection from a variety of angles. I hope our members, and those reading the Journal for the first time, see the common thread that runs through such activities. Whether it's our campaigning work, practical efforts on the ground, or the John Muir Award, all are part of the same story; combined, they help us to protect, enhance and value our wild places. Sometimes referred to as our three 'pillars', they are not necessarily dependent on each other, but are equally valuable in terms of advancing our cause.



I'm delighted to report that we've seen a good and positive response to the members' survey that was sent as part of our Members' News mailing in the summer. Thank you to everyone who took the time to let us know what they think about the Trust and what we do. I'm pleased to say that we appear to be doing a good job and we've been given some clear steers for the future.

We will report back on the findings in more detail in the New Year, but a good proportion of you, I know, will be interested to read about our current battle to protect wild land at Stronelairg in the Highlands. In these pages, Alan McCombes outlines why we see this proposed wind farm site as such an important place to defend, not only for its own sake but for that of wild land in Scotland generally. This is very much a 'live' issue, so please keep abreast of developments by signing up for our monthly e-newsletter, or follow us on twitter or via our website.

Under Welsh skies:  
Carreg y Saeth Isaf in  
the Rhinogydd

In the previous edition of the Journal, we paid special attention to John Muir himself and I'm pleased to say that we are not the only ones who have acknowledged the huge contribution he made, and continues to make, through his legacy. We had a positive response to an article written by Susan Wright for the *Sunday Herald* newspaper earlier this year and we thought it deserved to be read by a very discerning audience – our members. I hope you enjoy the piece. If it touches a nerve, or any other part of you for that matter, we'd be very happy to hear from you.

If just imagining John Muir wasn't enough, we also have the real thing, or at least Al Smith who did his very best Muir impression, dressing and equipping himself as the man himself, on a recent three-day journey of discovery in the Cairngorms.

And so to the future, and exciting developments in Wales. In fact, the wildest most rugged part of Wales: the Rhinogydd in Snowdonia. Will Williams, a son of Wales and one of our trustees, sets the scene for our first property purchase there – and our first outside of Scotland. As a UK organisation, it is vital that we try to engage with the full breadth of wild land areas, their culture, wildlife, people and language. We are excited about the opportunity to take on the guardianship of what is a well-cared for wild gem. Please see the enclosed appeal leaflet, or find out more online.

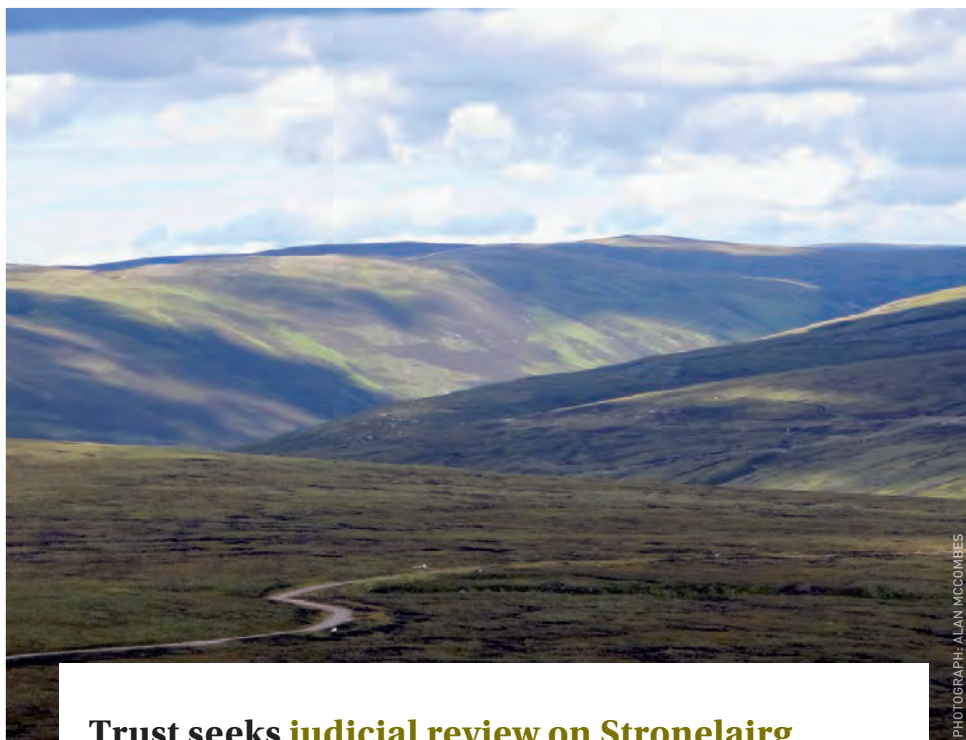
We have a short amount of time to raise a substantial sum to not only purchase Carreg y Saeth Isaf – as the property is known – but also ensure that we can look after it long into the future. I hope we can report positive news on this early in the New Year.

As always, thank you for reading. And thank you for your continued support and interest in our work.

Stuart Brooks  
Chief executive, John Muir Trust







PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN MCCOMBES

## Trust seeks judicial review on Stronelaig

The John Muir Trust has lodged a petition to the Court of Session for a judicial review of the decision of the Highland Council South Planning Application Committee to conditionally raise no objection to a proposed 83-turbine wind farm at Stronelaig in the heart of the Monadhliath Mountains.

The decision went against the national interest objection from Scottish Natural Heritage, which stated that the development – spread over an area of 35 square kilometres, one and a half times the size of Inverness – would destroy the character of one of Scotland's key areas of wild land.

Planning authorities are legally obliged to determine applications in accordance with local and national planning policy when considering development applications. Legal advice to the Trust indicates that the Stronelaig decision was based on a fundamental misinterpretation by the council planning officials of the National Planning Framework, Scottish Planning Policy and the Highland-wide Local Development Plan – and was therefore unlawful.

John Hutchison, chair of the John Muir Trust and Highland Council resident, said: "This legal action is not directed against the councillors, who have to deal with multiple issues and are forced to rely on expert advice from officials.

"We believe the quality of the advice itself was flawed and

The Monadhliath Mountains (pictured above) are considered one of Scotland's key areas of remaining wild land

fundamentally in conflict with the existing local and national planning policy – which states explicitly that authorities should safeguard the character of wild land areas. Since the decision was taken, the Scottish Government has confirmed the existing protection of wild land and proposed a further strengthening of wild land protection.

"In the light of existing and emerging planning policy frameworks, the decision to not object to the Stronelaig application was, in our opinion, both unreasonable and unlawful."

Helen McDade, the Trust's head of policy, said: "The Monadhliath area is recognised by Scottish Natural Heritage as one of the key areas of core wild land in Scotland. Stronelaig, in the heart of this mountain range, is the largest wind application ever considered by Highland Council.

"The same local authority recently – and rightly – raised objections to smaller developments at Glenmorie and Dalnessie on wild land grounds. The council has not explained this fundamental inconsistency. However, it would be perverse if the very much larger Stronelaig proposal was not subject to the same rigorous public scrutiny as these two applications."

See page 16 for more on the proposed wind development at Stronelaig.

## Land-owning charities show their worth

The five main land-owning conservation charities in Scotland make a significant contribution to the economy, recent research reveals. The Centre for Mountain Studies at the University of Highlands and Islands has produced a report, for the Scottish Land Reform Review Group, revealing the extent to which the John Muir Trust, National Trust for Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust Scotland create jobs, attract tourists and enhance Scotland's landscapes through land ownership.

Among the key findings, the report highlighted how in addition to protecting the natural heritage of specific sites, direct expenditure by conservation charities on land management stands at more than £37m per annum (rising to £64m when wider organisational expenditure is included).

The study also found that almost four million people a year visit land owned by conservation charities (bringing revenues of up to £105m into remote communities); direct employment related to sites accounts for 736 full time equivalent positions; and that some 5,000 volunteers a year carry out almost 300,000 hours of work at such sites. This work, said the report, is not only worth up to £3 million a year, but also contributes significantly to volunteers' health and well-being.

"This report confirms that land which is owned and managed in the interests of conservation conveys wider social and economic benefits to local communities and to the nation as a whole," commented Mike Daniel's, the Trust's head of land and science.



PHOTOGRAPH: SUSAN WRIGHT

Land owned by conservation bodies in Scotland benefits from much more than just environmental protection



PHOTOGRAPH: COLIN PRIOR

## £64,000 and counting

At the time of going to press, well over 800 members and supporters had donated more than £64,000 (including Gift Aid) to the Trust's Protect Wild Land appeal – nearly £25,000 above our initial target. This has been a fantastic response to the Trust's commitment to defend wild land within the current planning system, as well as advocate for better protection over the long term.

Thanks to all members and supporters who have demonstrated their passion for wild land both by writing in response to the government consultation and through donations. Further donations to the Protect Wild Land appeal can still be made at [www.jmt.org/protect.asp](http://www.jmt.org/protect.asp)

Top photographer Colin Prior lent his support to the Protect Wild Land appeal

## Policy team gears up for busy autumn

The Trust's policy team is about to represent wild land at two Public Local Inquiries (PLI) for wind farm developments being proposed in Sutherland: Glenmorrie and Dalnessie.

The Glenmorrie PLI pre-examination meeting took place in late July. The proposal is for a 34-turbine development with the site extending into an area identified in recent mapping by Scottish Natural Heritage as a 'core area of wild land'.

The Inquiry was triggered after the Highland Council voted to raise an official objection against the proposal on the grounds that it would disrupt wildlife and disfigure scenic landscapes. The Trust has also flagged the danger that this development could have a damaging effect on the area's peatland – an important carbon store and habitat.

Meanwhile, the pre-examination meeting that marks the start of the Dalnessie PLI is due to take place in late September. In this case, it follows the decision by the Highland Council's North Planning Committee in February to raise official objections against a proposal for 27 turbines near Lairg. Dalnessie is an important habitat for breeding populations of black-throated diver.

## Public consultation backs wild land protection

The Scottish Government has received more than 100 submissions backing its proposal to strengthen wild land protection from large scale wind farms, with fewer than 50 responses opposed to the plan. Those supporting wild land protection include individuals, charities, environmentalists, outdoors organisations, councils, community groups, and professional bodies.

Many submissions called for the Scottish Government to go further by declaring an outright ban on large scale wind farm development on wild land, in line with their policy proposal for National Scenic Areas and National Parks.

Almost all responses opposing strengthened protection were submitted by businesses with a direct financial interest in developing wild land. More than two thirds of all hostile responses came from outside Scotland, with more than a third submitted by multi-national corporations based in the US, Germany, France and other European countries.

No environmental organisations declared their opposition to the proposal for greater wild land protection.



PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW COWAN/SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY CORPORATE BODY

The Trust will maintain pressure on the Scottish Government to strengthen wild land protection

The Scottish Government will now consider these responses to inform the final Scottish Planning Policy and the proposed National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3). The former is expected to be published towards the end of this year, while the latter will be laid before the Scottish Parliament for scrutiny, giving it a period of 60 days to respond.

The Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Regeneration Committee is expected to take evidence on NPF3 during September and October 2013, before publication of the final document around June 2014.

There is still much to play for and we have to maintain the pressure – in particular, lobbying for the Scottish Government to adopt the principle of using a map to identify our core wild land areas.

You can read more about our initial analysis of responses on page 19.



## Fantastic response to recent membership survey



PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD ROWE

The Trust's recent membership survey, sent with the summer issue of Members' News, generated a great response, with more than 1,000 members (roughly 10% of our overall membership) taking the time to respond – with additional responses continuing to arrive daily.

Between now and the end of this year, we will study all comments and reflect on how they can help inform the best use of the Trust's people, time and financial resources in the years ahead.

In the meantime, we can tell you that Trust members are an extremely active group of people who participate in a huge variety of activities, from wild swimming and camping to orienteering, running, skiing, geology and bird watching. And, of course, they all have a shared passion for wild land and the need to protect it.

A full report on the survey response will be published in the January 2014 issue of Members' News. In the meantime, the Trust would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to provide feedback, comments and suggestions. It is greatly appreciated.

The recent survey reiterated our members' passion for wild land and places

## Muir missions proving popular



PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE DANIELS

The new e-book is now also available in a printed hard copy

In April, a unique and already hugely popular set of 20 'missions' was created to inspire people to follow in the footsteps of John Muir. The resulting *Mission: Explore John Muir*, is a free-to-download ebook that captures a variety of Muir's adventures and messages and turns them into quirky, easy-to-complete activities.

An initiative between the Trust and Mission: Explore – a series of books created by the Geography Collective – the two have since teamed with Urdd Gobaith Cymru and Fèisean nan Gàidheal to create online Welsh and Gaelic versions.

In response to demand, a printed hard copy is now also available for just £1. For details, see [www.tinyurl.com/jmtmexp](http://www.tinyurl.com/jmtmexp)

## Endorsement for deer management stance

Following a visit to the Ardvar Woodlands with staff from the John Muir Trust and Scottish Wildlife Trust, Rob Gibson, MSP for Caithness and Sutherland, has called for a radical rethink of deer management policy in Scotland.

Spread over three estates, including Quinag, which is owned and managed by the John Muir Trust, Ardvar is part of the most northerly oak woodland in the British Isles. It has been a site of Special Scientific Interest for more than four decades and has been designated a European Special Area of Conservation for the past eight years.

However, due to years of overgrazing by deer, it is now in 'unfavourable, declining' condition. Concerned that the woodland might disappear altogether, the Trust last year proposed to reduce deer numbers on Quinag – a move that saw neighbouring sporting estates, backed by traditional sporting interests across the Highlands, denounce the Trust within the local community and through the national media.



PHOTOGRAPH: SUSAN WRIGHT

A deer-browsed birch at Ardvar Woodlands

Now the local MSP, who is also convenor of the Scottish Parliament's influential Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environmental Committee, has effectively endorsed the Trust's stance.

In a paper circulated to the committee, he said: "Supporters of traditional deer stalking appear to be at loggerheads with growing concerns among environmental workers for the poor state of the Special Area of Conservation at Ardvar and Loch a'Mhuillinn on the southern shores of

Eddrachillis Bay. I saw with my own eyes how current practices in deer management are failing the biodiversity of the area."

The MSP is now calling for greater transparency, accountability and regulation of the deer management practices of Scotland's sporting estates. His paper argues that current voluntary arrangements should now be brought under statutory control.

At the time of going to press, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environmental Committee had just met and decided to put deer management in Scotland on the committee's work programme. This means that the issue will be discussed further and debated with input from key players such as the Trust.

This puts the Trust's call for statutory deer management back on the political agenda, which is good news for all the native woodlands across Scotland that are dying because of over-grazing, exacerbating the decline in biodiversity across the country.

For questions on the Trust's approach to sustainable deer management, contact Mike Daniels, head of land and science, [mike.daniels@jmt.org](mailto:mike.daniels@jmt.org).





Students from Fife's Elmwood College work on repairing a section of the Sandwood path

## Trust visits properties to outline path management approach

As a follow-up to the development of the Trust's path management proposal, key stakeholders were invited to site visits in Skye and at Quinag over the summer to look at sections of path that demonstrate varying stages of trail development and erosion. The aim was to inform interest groups and statutory bodies of the Trust's approach to path management, including how work has been prioritised, special considerations for designated sites, and how the project will be funded.

In Skye, site visits included examining the badly-eroded section of the Blabheinn path, plus the early stages of erosion on the Beinn Dearg Mheadhonach path, while at Quinag it was the now deteriorating main trail up to Sail Gharbh that was the focus of attention.

The path project aims to protect the environment and wild land quality from the impact of recreational access, while trying to retain their rugged nature. It is a delicate balancing act and further consultation will be carried out with interested user groups and local communities later in the year to discuss specific works.

Separately, the Trust was delighted to host students from Fife's Elmwood College in May for a week's work experience repairing sections of the main path to Sandwood Bay. In what is a continuation of a relationship first developed in 2012, students studying for their NC in Countryside Management joined path officer Chris Goodman to tackle a few short sections of path where braiding had started to develop.

## Update on UK-wide advocacy work

The Trust's advocacy work outside of Scotland continues to gather steam, with considerable weight being put behind key campaigns in England and Wales for new protected areas, or to prevent inappropriate development.

Recent efforts have included publicly supporting the Campaign for National Parks and Friends of the Lake District's campaign for extensions to the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks, as well as collaborating on objections to potash mining on the Yorkshire Moors.

Elsewhere, the Trust has assisted an alliance of campaign organisations objecting to five wind farms on areas of high wild land quality in mid-Wales, including a donation of £2,000 to assist in the presentation of landscape evidence.

Meanwhile, the Trust continues its more general lobbying to influence UK-wide policy. While greater protection for wild land is important, so too is ensuring that wild land is valued at public policy level. This is particularly crucial at the moment given that all governments are putting 'growth' first, with anything that stands in the way, including hard-fought-for environmental protections, at risk.

One key current focus at Westminster is to look at any opportunities presented by the passage of the Energy Bill through the House of Lords. Many parliamentarians are sympathetic to our concerns, with the parliamentary reception held last year having helped raise our profile significantly.

The Trust's concerns about the impact of infrastructure on wild land were put on public record during discussions about amendments to the Bill at Committee stage in July. We are now securing a good level of cross-party support for key amendments to prevent existing environmental safeguards being eroded by the Bill.

Earlier in the year, the Trust received positive coverage thanks to a debate led by Lord Greaves on the value of the outdoors, and we hope to secure two further Lords debates in the autumn, which will be opportunities to highlight the value and benefits of wild land for people and nature.

Alongside parliamentary work, the Trust has also participated in Ofgem, National Grid and Transmission Operator consultation groups. This involvement has seen the Trust respond to Ofgem consultations on: impact assessments (to ensure environmental considerations are properly reflected); integrated transmission (we have pushed for a total costs approach to highlight the huge costs of energy schemes on remote wild land); and transmission price control (we have pushed for National Scenic Areas to be included in the allowance for undergrounding transmission lines in protected areas).

Finally, the Trust also continues to participate on a Natural England Large Landscape Conservation group which offers great scope for promoting the benefits of wild land and sharing the Trust's experience.

## AGM & Members' Gathering 2014

The 2014 John Muir Trust AGM & Members' Gathering will be held at Dunbar Parish Church & Hall on 2 and 3 May. Full details and a booking form will be included in the January Members' News. If wishing to attend, members are advised to book accommodation in the area as soon as possible.

## John Muir Award showcased on film

The Trust recently unveiled a new John Muir Award information film to inspire individuals or potential providers who might be interested in the Award. Produced by John Muir Award manager, Rob Bushby, with film-makers, Polished Project, the 10-minute film includes sections on John Muir and the Trust itself. The Trust is now in the process of creating several separate short items around the main film, including a John Muir section, a 'four challenges' section and a two-minute trailer. The full film can be viewed at [www.jmt.org/jmaward-film.asp](http://www.jmt.org/jmaward-film.asp)





PHOTOGRAPH BY JOE COBURN/ISH/2020VISION





To have and to hold: in areas such as Assynt (pictured), Scotland still has expanses of wild land unblighted by industrial-scale developments

# The wild and the wind

In a reprint of an essay first published in the *Sunday Herald* on 21 April to mark John Muir's 175th birthday, **Susan Wright** explores how the celebration of Muir in his Scottish homeland squares with the treatment of our own wild spaces

**JOHN MUIR'S PRESENCE** in the California Hall of Fame might bemuse many people on this side of the Atlantic. Steve Jobs, Barbra Streisand, Clint Eastwood and Walt Disney may be household names here, but the Dunbar-born naturalist – celebrated in America as the founding father of the country's 400 national parks – remains an obscure figure in his native Scotland. And while his writings are familiar to conservationists and mountaineers, his name would leave most people scratching their heads in a pub quiz.

That may be about to change. Today is the first John Muir Day in Scotland, marking the 175th anniversary of his birth. Meanwhile, the Scottish Government has made Muir a focal point for the Year of Natural Scotland (this year) and Homecoming (in 2014), partly in the hope of attracting visitors from the United States.

Yet our relationship with the man who pioneered the modern conservation movement is paradoxical. We want to reflect the glory of this champion of wilderness, but we exploit the land of his birth for commercial gain. We've been doing it for centuries through deforestation, hunting, large-scale sheep farming and sport. John McGrath exposed this most eloquently in his 1970s play, *The Cheviot, The Stag And The Black, Black Oil*.

If he were alive today, McGrath may well have expanded his title to add the latest Highland gold rush. The spread of colossal wind farms across our wildest landscapes promises to generate billions of pounds in profits for energy corporations and private landowners. In return, we are supposed to be creating lovely, clean, low-carbon energy, plenty of jobs and a better world. So why does it feel wrong?

Wind power is meant to help us tackle climate change by reducing the consumption of fossil fuels. But despite all the turbines built so far, carbon emissions continue to rise. We now burn more coal than gas, we are opening up 14 new oilfields, our economy is still based on endless consumerism, and most of our houses are draughty heat-leakers. Meanwhile, we attempt to save the planet by eroding the remaining places where nature might flourish, and where people can find peace, beauty, clean air and adventure.

If the proposed wind farm at Stronelaig goes ahead, 67 turbines, each 135 metres tall, will tower over the landscape from a high plateau in the heart of the Monadhliath mountains, near





PHOTOGRAPH: MARK HAMLIN/2020VISION

Loch Ness. Much of the development will be built on peatland, an internationally important habitat that stores huge amounts of carbon, supports wildlife and helps to filter clean water. Around one million tonnes of rock will be excavated to build the site's concrete foundations and 40 miles of access roads. The entire development will create a footprint the size of Inverness, making Stronelairg not so much a wind farm as a wind city (for more, see page 16). It is just one of many wind cities being proposed for Scotland.

#### BOYHOOD RAMBLINGS

As a boy, John Muir loved roaming the Lammermuir Hills, and the woodlands and coastline near his East Lothian home. He was just 10 when his family emigrated to the US in 1849, but he would later recall his love of "everything that was wild" in Scotland. What would he have made of the current assault on wild places and open spaces in the land of his birth?

Muir dedicated his adult life to protecting vast swathes of the American wilderness. These weren't places devoid of human presence. Native Americans had inhabited and explored every inch of California, but they had a profound respect for the land that provided the food, water and beauty that sustained them. This connection to the natural world was alien to many of the Europeans who were exploiting California's natural riches with vigour in the late 19th century.

Following his first visit to Yosemite, Muir observed that "in a few feverish years", the "pick-and-shovel storms" of the Californian gold rush had severely damaged great swathes of the state, in sharp contrast to the centuries of minimal impact by Native Americans who, he wrote, "walk softly and hurt the landscape hardly more than the birds and squirrels".

By the time Muir wrote these words in 1869, much

of Scotland's natural heritage had been destroyed. Most of her native tree cover had gone – felled over the centuries for houses, agriculture, and ships, and to fuel the Industrial Revolution. As a result, nutrient-rich soils were blown away by the wind that now had free rein over the bare hillsides. Plants and insects disappeared.

Bear, beaver, wolf, lynx, boar, aurochs, sea eagle, red kite and other species were lost to merciless hunting and shrinking habitats, reaching a climax when the Victorians waged a programme of extermination across the Highlands to clear the land of any living thing that might compete for their prized game birds and other sporting targets.

Today, most of our bare hills and moors have been over-grazed by sheep and deer, and over-managed to favour the growth of heather for game birds to the detriment of the flora and fauna that would otherwise live there. Blocks of dense commercial forestry pockmark the land, lacking the rich biodiversity that thrives in native woodlands. Most of us are so disconnected from nature, we can't read the landscape around us.

I grew up loving what little of Scotland's lochs and winding rivers, dramatic mountain peaks and woodland I had managed to explore outside of Edinburgh, where I lived. I didn't realise that the bare hills and angular forestry lines, which I didn't love so much, were representative of a landscape that has been devastated ecologically.

Understanding Scotland's landscape a little better now, I can see why my first trip to California stirred deep emotions. In California, and many other areas of the US, you can hike for days far from towns, wander through groves of giant redwood trees, sit by glacial rivers and saunter along upland trails alongside numerous types of birds, wildflowers and

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Letting the land breathe: instead of industrialising wild land we could help native woodland expand and thrive (above); a patchwork of grazed and burnt moorland managed for sporting interests (right)

PHOTOGRAPH: PETER CAIRNS/2020VISION





**‘We need to break the habit of exploiting our land to the nth degree. Let’s think differently. Let’s heal the future’**

animals (including the occasional bear) that have thrived for millennia.

The US is by no means an undamaged land, but massive areas are protected in ways we Scots can only dream of. Thanks largely to Muir, the Yosemite Valley became a national park in 1890, and today nearly half of California’s land – an area the size of Scotland and England combined – is protected in national parks, nature reserves, wildlife refuges and so on.

Speaking in support of building the Stronelairg wind city, one Highland councillor said: “This is the kind of landscape that breaks my heart. There isn’t a tree – they are long gone. The whole area is huge sporting estates and the land has been hammered. It’s not in its natural state.”

The depletion of our precious natural resources is indeed heart-breaking, but to conclude that the land is degraded and therefore not worth protecting is dangerous. There could be no end to the damage

wreaked on Earth if we hold up past destruction as a guiding principle.

As the American environmentalist Paul Hawken said recently: “We have an economy that tells us that it is cheaper to destroy Earth in real time than to renew, restore, and sustain it – we are stealing the future, selling it in the present and calling it gross domestic product. We can just as easily have an economy that is based on healing the future instead of stealing it.”

We need to break the habit of exploiting our land to the nth degree. Let’s think differently. Let’s heal the future. Wind power can contribute to our energy needs, and is particularly suited to small-scale community and agricultural power generation. But it has downsides – most notably, the sheer number of hectares that need to be torn up to deliver





PHOTOGRAPH: MARK HAMLIN/2020VISION

grid-connected turbines. In Scotland, 176 wind farms (2,136 turbines in total) are now either operational or under construction, with a further 229 developments (2,648 turbines) in the pipeline. No end point has been agreed. We don't know how many turbines will be considered enough or how much of our natural landscape will be affected.

Some argue that Scotland is too small to have savannahs of wildness untouched by development when climate change is such a serious threat. But it's precisely because Scotland is so small that we need to cherish our natural resources and value our wild places. Scotland sits 117th in terms of land mass size compared to the rest of the world, but our coastline is the 12th longest. This suggests that Scotland's contribution to the fight against climate change might be better focused on unleashing the immense power of marine energy rather than sacrificing large chunks of precious, finite wild land to concrete and steel.

Wild land - with its amazing ability to store carbon, provide water and clean the air - is our ally in coping with climate change. As the weather becomes more extreme, plants and animals will need space to adapt. Nature cannot flourish under a spread of metal and concrete.

#### CREATIVE THINKING

We need more imaginative solutions to provide hope for a future where the natural world, including that bit in our own backyards, can thrive. Before turning to diggers, to metal and concrete, we should be doing everything possible to reduce energy consumption. We could bring building insulation up to Scandinavian standards, offer free public transport to cut car use, reduce long-distance transportation of goods and even help convert rural, oil-heated houses (which, though often situated close to wind farms, don't benefit from them).

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe," Muir famously wrote. By observing the natural world, he recognised that an intricate web of life sustains us all. That is what we are playing with when we destroy wild land.

We need to observe with keener eyes what is happening to our country, our home. Muir saw wildness as a necessity, not a luxury, and urged everyone to "keep close to Nature's heart - and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods".

During the Depression in the 1930s, young people

from Glasgow found solace from poverty and urban misery in the hills and woods outside the industrial city. Many of them went on to found the country's first walking and mountaineering clubs. Nowadays, every weekend thousands of us flee the confinement of offices and houses for the great outdoors. Distant horizons and mighty mountains remind us of our insignificance. The sighting of a red squirrel or sea eagle excites us. Nature recharges us; it makes us better people.

I once heard a farmer say: "You can't eat a view." But, as Muir pointed out: "We all need beauty as well as bread." Views matter. If they didn't, then landscape photographers wouldn't make a living; Yosemite National Park wouldn't build a trail to the edge of the valley so that visitors in wheelchairs can see the spectacular miles-long vista; and songs wouldn't be written about the bonny banks of Loch Lomond. If landscape was unimportant, people wouldn't travel halfway across the world to see Scotland.

The John Muir Trust is calling for a wild land designation, which would protect areas identified for their ecological and special landscape values. I think the world's greatest naturalist would have approved. Trust chairman John Hutchison said recently: "If John Muir could see what is being done to his native land today in the name of progress, he would be grief-stricken. He would agree we need to fight climate change, reduce our carbon emissions and move away from fossil fuels - but not by trashing nature."

The truth is, we can build a great many things - roads and cities and technological wonders - but we cannot build wilderness. And this one small country, on this one habitable planet, is all we've got. □

Where there's life: the carnivorous sundew, a classic peatland plant (above); the return of the sea eagle to Scotland continues to excite (below)



PHOTOGRAPH: MARK HAMLIN/2020VISION

#### About the author

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# HF Holidays

One of the Trust's Silver corporate members, **HF Holidays**, has spent the past 100 years helping people to experience the great outdoors

Celebrating its centenary this year, HF Holidays offers a range of guided holidays and short breaks that see guests join groups led by expert leaders on a choice of walks from short rambles to longer, more strenuous treks, both in the UK and worldwide.

Founded in 1913, HF Holidays is a co-operative society that now arranges holidays for more than 50,000 people each year – making it the UK's largest walking and leisure activity holidays company. By the very nature of the holidays on offer, and the company's use of trails in areas of wild land, it relies on the efforts of organisations such as the John Muir Trust that put so much into maintaining trails and raising the awareness of why wild land is so special.

Itself deeply committed to responsible tourism, HF Holidays' Pathways Fund – a charity established in 1998 – supports local air ambulance and mountain rescue

teams, as well as repairing footpaths and protecting the countryside where its groups walk.

The company's founder, Thomas Arthur Leonard, was a true pioneer of the outdoor movement. Like John Muir himself, he loved the outdoors and was passionate about its protection. His initial aim was to ensure that more people could discover "the joy and freedom of the open fells" – a mission that continues to hold true today.

UK holidays are based at a selection of 19 country houses in prime walking country that are either owned by HF Holidays or used on long-term leases. One of the first country houses in the HF Holidays portfolio was Bryn Corach in Conwy. Leonard chose this location because of his love for Wales – with the challenge of climbing nearby Snowdon continuing to lure guests to the area. The company's latest property, Craflywn Hall,



again situated within the Snowdonia National Park, is also proving extremely popular.

Through its holidays and charitable work, HF Holidays will continue to champion the great outdoors and work with the John Muir Trust to ensure that the UK's wild lands remain special. [www.hfholidays.co.uk](http://www.hfholidays.co.uk) □

The John Muir Trust would like to thank HF Holidays and all our corporate members and supporters, as well as those other companies who provide support such as payroll giving schemes:

## GOLD CORPORATE MEMBERS

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The Watermill  
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We greatly value the contribution of the growing number of companies that support the Trust through membership, donations, promotional initiatives and in-kind support. If your business would like to help our business of protecting wild land and wild places, please contact Fiona Mackintosh on **01796 484 970**, or [fiona.mackintosh@jmt.org](mailto:fiona.mackintosh@jmt.org)



# Taking a stand

**Alan McCombes** outlines how the giant wind farm proposed at Stronelairst in the Monadhliath Mountains poses a very real threat to an outstanding area of wild land – and why it is worth fighting against

**BETWEEN LOCH NESS** and the Cairngorms lies a vast, mysterious landscape which has been described as Scotland's *terra incognita*. The Monadhliath Mountains range across more than 700 square miles – an area larger than the Peak District and not much smaller than the Lake District. But while these English upland regions are inhabited by tens of thousands of people, criss-crossed by roads, and swarm with several million visitors a year, the Monadhliaths lie empty and silent, even in the height of summer. Here, there are only a handful of isolated lodges and farm steadings connected to the outside world via a few rudimentary tracks.

This is not picture postcard territory. The Monadhliaths lack the splendour and drama of the nearby Cairngorms, or the Nevis range to the south west. Yet, while the Grey Hills – to give them their English translation – may not have such dazzling charisma, these rolling hills and plateaux have their own understated charm, heightened by the sense of solitude that hangs heavy in the air. On a fine day in late August this year, I tramped the southern Monadhliaths from morning till sunset without encountering another human being.

This atmosphere of wild remoteness has made the Monadhliaths a prime target for energy corporations looking for vast landscapes in which to build industrial-scale developments. Three major wind farms have already been built or approved in the area, including the fiercely controversial Dumnaglass development, which provoked over 1,500 objections and was described by mountaineering writer and broadcaster, Cameron McNeish, as “sickening in its scale and insensitivity”.

A further three proposals are still at the application stage. One of these, Allt Duine, on the edge of the Cairngorms National Park, is even more contentious, with locally-based photographer and author, Chris Townsend, denouncing the proposal as “the equivalent of building a Tesco in the Grand Canyon”.

Allt Duine was subject to a Public Local Inquiry, with the outcome expected at any time. But as things stand, the largest wind development of all in these mountains could be given the go-ahead by a Scottish Government minister without the rigorous scrutiny of an open inquiry. So far, councillors and planning officials at the Highland Council have supported the Stronelairst development, with the proviso

‘The wild remoteness of the area has made the Monadhliaths a prime target for energy corporations’



that the project be scaled down from 83 turbines to 67. That would still make it the largest wind farm in the mainland Highlands – one that would cover an area larger than Inverness or East Kilbride.

According to SSE, the developer, the wind farm will power 250,000 homes with clean, green electricity, helping Scotland meet its climate change targets and contribute to the fight against global warming. On the face of it, that sounds impressive. But the arithmetic does not stack up.

The maximum installed capacity of Stronelairg, even based on the higher figure of 83 turbines, is 300 MW. That is around five per cent, or one twentieth, of Scotland's existing installed renewables capacity (as of December 2012). A simple calculation suggests that if Stronelairg really was capable of supplying all the electricity to a quarter of a million households, then the rest of Scotland's renewables industry would already be powering the equivalent of around five million homes – more than double Scotland's entire housing stock.

If SSE's figure is accurate, then, even allowing for commercial and industrial electricity consumption, Scotland would already have smashed its target to

generate 100 per cent of its electricity needs through renewables by 2020. Yet, according to the Scottish Government's Third National Planning Framework (April 2013), Scotland will have to expand its renewables capacity two and a half times over to reach the target.

#### CO-ORDINATED ACTION

Few people today would dispute the need to shift society away from its reliance on fossil fuels. Climate change poses a very real threat to the entire eco-system. At national and international level, we need urgent, co-ordinated action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But there is growing evidence that the proliferation of industrial-scale wind farms on wild land has been, at best, a tokenistic diversion of resources and investment that could have been more efficiently deployed in the battle against climate change. At worst, developments such as that proposed at Stronelairg may even be counter-productive.

According to SSE's own Environmental Statement, the Stronelairg project will involve quarrying 730,000 cubic metres of stone from borrow pits around the site to build access tracks, turbine foundations and bases.

All of this disruption will take place on a

site which the developer acknowledges consists of more than 70 per cent wet, blanket peatland – Scotland's miniature version of the rainforest – which locks in up to 20 times as much carbon per acre as the average British woodland. More than one third of that is unmodified with the rest of it capable of being fully restored. The building of a giant development on this site, with the associated excavation and destruction of the soil, flies in the face of advice from the Scottish Government's own expert advisers who have stated that there is no justification for building wind farms on healthy peatland.

The Monadhliaths support one of Europe's most extensive tracts of upland blanket bog. A serious, joined-up strategy to curb Scotland's carbon emissions would include the protection and, where necessary, restoration of this vast carbon storehouse. And it would exclude from this type of terrain such destructive developments as that proposed for Stronelairg.

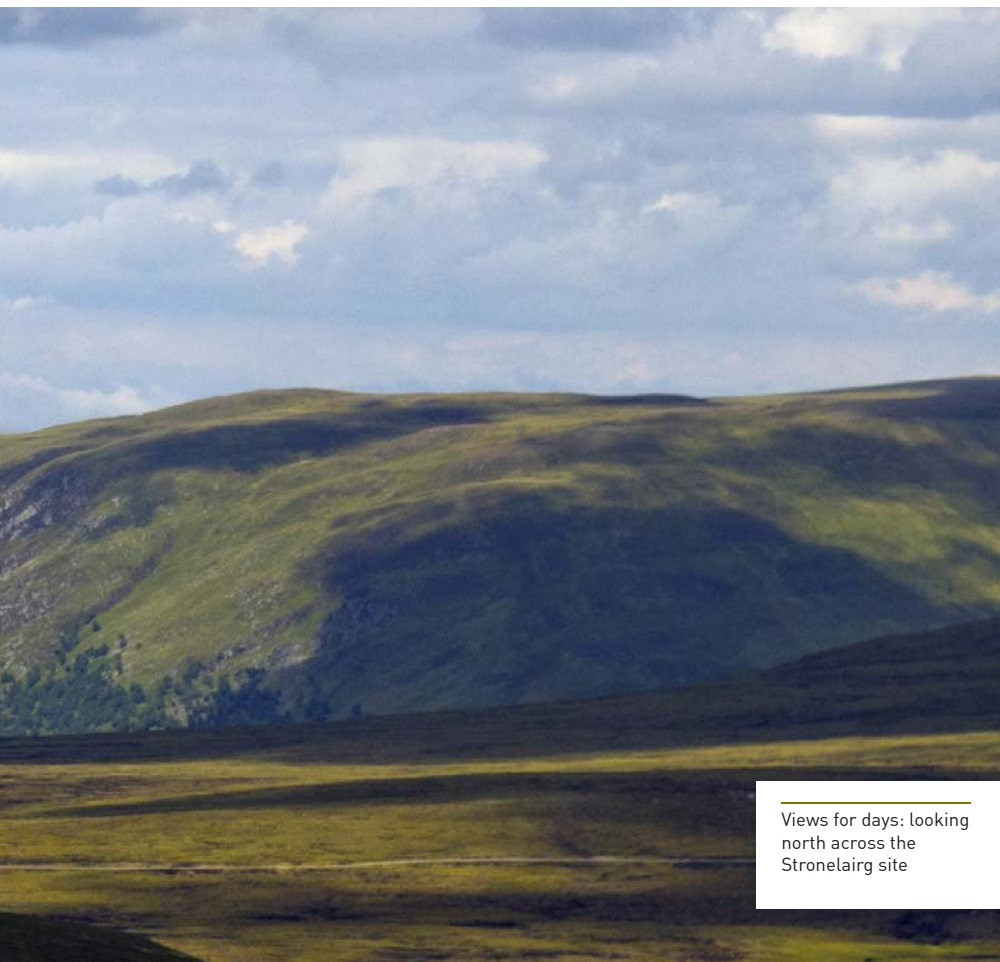
#### PROFIT AND LOSS

But this is not about climate change. And neither are the corporations who are driving wind energy in the wild lands of the Scottish Highlands ethical crusaders fighting to save the planet. Over 90 per cent of the power generated by SSE is non-renewable, mainly from coal and gas. Its mission is to make money for its shareholders. And it does that very well indeed. Today, the company has 10 million customers, mainly in the south of England, and a market value of £13 billion – the equivalent of Morrison's and Sainsbury combined, but with just seven per cent of the workforce of the two supermarket chains.

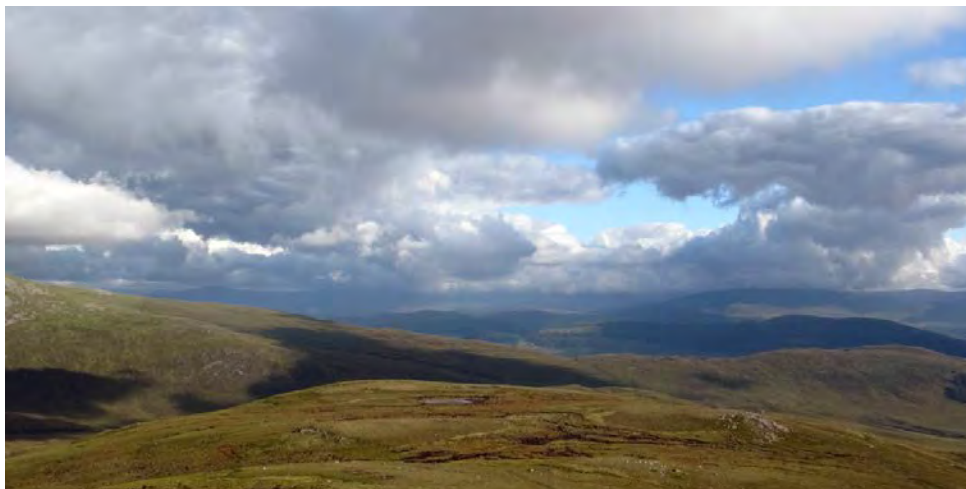
The Stronelairg development alone is estimated to be worth around £1 billion to SSE, while the landowner – Charles Connell of the Belfast and Clydeside ship-building dynasty – stands to make something in the region of £60 million as his cut for leasing the land.

With such large sums of money at stake, it would be both naïve and irresponsible not to put the claims of the developer under the microscope. Earlier this year, SSE was fined a record £10.5 million by UK energy watchdog Ofgem for deceiving its own would-be customers. According to Ofgem, the company provided "misleading and unsubstantiated statements" to potential customers. So why should anyone take at face value anything said by SSE – especially when such a lucrative deal is within its grasp?

In support of its application, SSE states



Views for days: looking north across the Stronelairg site



that Stronelairg will create employment in the Highlands during the construction phase equivalent to 379 job years, with a further 117 long-term local jobs to follow after the wind farm is up and running. But the company neither constructs nor maintains its wind farms, and therefore has no control over how many workers are employed or where they are recruited. Its figures are based largely on extravagant guesswork.

We can, however, measure the accuracy of this guesswork against recent experience. Last year, SSE opened the Griffin wind farm in Perthshire, which is around the same size as Stronelairg. The building of the infrastructure of the site was carried out by Northern Ireland-based Lagan Construction. During that construction, almost the entire workforce was brought into the area from outside. This may have

Wide, open space: the Monadhliaths have been described by SNH as "one of Scotland's key areas of wild land"

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and supported by the Scottish Government, which includes the Monadhliaths.

SSE justifies targeting Stronelairg on the grounds that "due to the presence of existing infrastructure, the proposed development area is not considered to be wild land". The infrastructure in question is the Glendoe Hydro scheme, constructed by SSE in 2008 just west of the Stronelairg site. Inconveniently for SSE, when this project was completed, the John Muir Trust hailed the development as "a great achievement" and congratulated the company "on the way that they have kept the landscape and environmental impacts

### 'Peatland locks in up to 20 times as much carbon per acre as the average British woodland'

given a temporary boost to a few local hotels, but it has created few, if any, local construction jobs. Meanwhile, the installation of the turbines, and their maintenance for the next five years at least, was contracted out to the German manufacturer, Siemens, which has since stated that Griffin will require a workforce of just 14 employees in technical and supervisory roles. That's just one-eighth of the figure claimed by SSE for Stronelairg.

Questionable facts such as these are one reason why there is now an overpowering case for a transparent Public Local Inquiry that will cut through the smoke and spin. It is especially important that the Stronelairg development is examined in the light of the Scottish Government's recent planning consultation documents promising special protection for wild land against large-scale development, and the publication of the Core Wild Land Map by

to an acceptable level". It is ironic that the company should now reject that compliment.

Ultimately, there is no way that a wind development of this scale can be built in this location without fundamentally altering the character of the landscape. If Stronelairg goes ahead, the great central plateau of the Monadhliaths would be industrialised and the heart ripped out of what SNH describes as "one of Scotland's key areas of wild land".

No large-scale development in such an important landscape should be allowed to proceed without, at the very least, a full-scale Public Local Inquiry. It is the only way to cut through the spin and clarify the facts. □

#### About the author

Alan McCombes is the Trust's communications editor. He can be contacted at [alan.mccombes@jmt.org](mailto:alan.mccombes@jmt.org)

#### THE RISE OF WIND CITIES

Stronelairg is just one of many industrial-scale wind farms that will dramatically alter Scotland's natural landscapes. Here are a few of the more controversial developments in the pipeline, which the Trust has been involved in:

##### Allt Duine

This proposed development from RWE for 31 turbines, 125 metres high, located a hairs-breadth from the Cairngorms National Park stirred a lot of public opinion. It was the subject of a Public Local Inquiry last year, to which the Trust gave evidence. Its outcome is expected later this year.

##### Glenmorrie

Located on the Kildermorie & Glencalvie Estates in Ardgay, Sutherland this 34-turbine proposal (125 metres high) is awaiting a Public Local Inquiry. US-based energy multi-national, AES, which operates in coal, gas and oil markets, as well as renewables, is behind the development.

##### Sallachy

Another Sutherland-based wind farm this time proposed by Germany based WKN AG for location on the Sallachy and Duchally estates close to the Assynt-Coigach National Scenic Area. An original proposal for 80 turbines was reduced to 30 then 22, each 125 metres high.

##### Glencassley

SSE originally proposed 47 turbines to be erected 12km north-west of Lairg between the River Cassley and Loch Shin in Sutherland. A revision to 23 won approval from Highland Council to eat further into Scotland's wild land resource. The Scottish Government may still reject it.

##### Dalnessie

The Dalnessie wind farm Public Local Inquiry is taking place this year following objections from Highland Council (see p7). It's another proposal from SSE to build in Sutherland – this time 27 turbines up to 135 metres tall, 13km north-east of Lairg.

##### Muaitheabhal

Nick Oppenheim, owner of the Eishken estate on the Isle of Lewis, finally got permission to build 33 turbines each 145 metres high next to a National Scenic Area. There has been an application for a second extension to the scheme, which threatens golden and white-tailed eagle populations.



# Who wants to protect Scotland's wild land?

Responses to a recent Scottish Government consultation show that a broad range of people and organisations, forming a 2 to 1 majority, want better protection for Scotland's wild land

**LOCAL AUTHORITIES**, community councils, charities, environmental groups, landowners, professional bodies and small businesses have all told the Scottish Government that they want better protection for Scotland's wild land (see news story on page 7).

Responses to the recent Scottish Government consultation on Scottish Planning Policy showed a ratio of 2 to 1 support for safeguarding wild land from large wind farms.

## Submissions supporting strengthened wild land protection

- 60 individuals
- 16 local authorities, community councils and local campaign groups
- 16 charities (including 14 environmental and outdoors organisations)
- 16 businesses (including landowners, planners, property agents and the Federation of Small Businesses)
- 3 professional bodies
- 1 political party

## Submissions opposing wild land protection

- 28 energy companies
- 16 property developers/ planners/ landowners
- 2 local authorities
- 1 professional body (Landscape Institute)
- 1 umbrella body for the renewables industry (Scottish Renewables)
- 1 individual

Fewer than 50 responses opposed better protection. The vast majority of those arguing that Scotland's wild land should not be protected, or indeed that Scotland does not have wild land, are multi-national energy corporations and property developers with a financial interest in exploiting our natural landscapes. Around a third of them are based in Scotland, a third in the rest of the UK, and a third in Europe or the US.

Some of those companies most hostile to wild land protection include:

**AES Wind** – based in Virginia, USA, generated \$17bn revenue in 2011 mainly from production of coal, gas oil, diesel and coke. It has an application to develop Glenmorrie on a core wild land area in Sutherland.

**Savills** – a London-based property multi-national with 500 offices worldwide, which sells prime real estate, including landed estates, in Scotland.

**Peel Energy** – a subsidiary of Manchester-based property development company, the Peel Group. The company owns 16 million square feet of retail parks worth £6.7bn including Braehead in Glasgow, the Metro Centre in Tyneside, the Trafford Centre in Manchester, and developments in the Bahamas, Bermuda and the Costa Del Sol.

**RWE nPower** – Germany's biggest energy corporation involved in coal, gas and nuclear. It has 10 wind farms in Scotland and is awaiting a decision on the controversial Allt Duine wind farm application on core wild land on the edge of the Cairngorms National Park.

**Fred Olsen** – Norwegian-based international drilling contractor involved in oil and gas exploration in Texas, Nigeria, the North Sea and Asia.

**EDF Energy** – based in France and the third largest corporation in Europe. EDF builds fossil fuel power plants and nuclear plants around the world, and has threatened to sue climate change campaigners for £5 million. Several EDF staff were jailed for spying on Greenpeace and was forced to pay the environmental organisation £450,000 in damages.

**Pinsent and Masons LLP** – London-based corporate law firm that provides legal services to oil, gas, nuclear and coal industry.

Responding to the submissions, John Hutchison, chair of the John Muir Trust, said: "Wild land is a precious, finite resource and it's heartening that so many

different people and groups have shown that they care about protecting it.

"The negative responses from energy corporations and property developers confirm that industrialisation of our wild land is driven not by concern over climate change, but by profit. Global corporations see Scotland's natural heritage as a resource to be plundered, while ordinary people, communities and environmentalists see it as a precious asset to be protected, nourished and restored."

John Muir Trust chief executive, Stuart Brooks, added: "We urgently need effective action to combat climate change but converting large swathes of wild land to industrial development is not the answer.

"Protecting our natural capital and investing in peatland and woodland conservation, recreation and tourism will deliver a far higher and more sustainable return on investment for the benefit of local communities, the nation and the health of the planet." □

## Footnote

An additional 45–50 submissions expressed general concern about wind farms, some at a local level, with others calling for a blanket ban on all wind development. We have excluded these from our figures because they make no mention of wild land, nor did they tick the relevant box in the consultation questionnaire.



# Buying a wild gem in Wales

This issue of the Journal sees the launch of an appeal to secure an area of outstanding wild land in the Rhinogydd area of Snowdonia – an exciting development that sees the Trust step into land ownership in Wales for the first time. **Will Williams** explains

**NESTLED IN THE SOUTHERN** half of Snowdonia National Park, to the east of Harlech, the Rhinogydd is known for what, even by Welsh standards, is a particularly rugged landscape. Very much off the beaten track, this remote area's distinct character is shaped by an ancient underlying geology, with jagged gritstone crags punctuating a dramatic landscape of rock and heather.

It is here, within Wales' most wild and least-visited mountain landscape, that the Trust aims to take its first step into owning and managing land outside of Scotland. The property in question is of modest size, but of significant ecological value: a 105-hectare parcel of land by the entrance to Cwm Bychan, at the head of the Arto Valley. Carreg y Saeth Isaf (meaning the lower rock of the arrow) is located in a Site of Special Scientific Interest, while the wider area is recognised as a Special Area of Conservation and a Biogenetic Reserve.

The current owner, who will continue to farm the adjacent lower ground, and his family have long managed the whole farm with nature in mind. Consequently, the owner is keen for it to remain that way under the guardianship of the Trust. It's a wonderful opportunity – one that does not come along very often.

## WHY HERE, WHY NOW?

The decision to acquire wild land in Wales is in line with the long-term thinking of the Trust – and a natural next step following several significant moves towards developing a greater UK-wide presence. In September 2011, the Board of Trustees approved the further expansion of the John Muir Award in England, while the following year saw the appointment of an advocacy officer based in London. The subsequent, and hugely-successful, reception held at Westminster in November 2012 marked a clear statement of the Trust's intent to deliver its message to decision-makers UK-wide.

And so to the here and now, and this particular initiative in Wales – one driven by a belief that each nation should have an opportunity to protect its best areas of wild land, not only for nature but also for the way it speaks of cultural heritage and community identity.

In a sense, we've been here before.

A decade or so ago, the Trust began negotiations to purchase two parcels of land in Wales, including one in the Rhinogydd. Neither was concluded, with one being on the open market and the other withdrawn for family reasons.

Now in a much stronger position, the Trust has been able to rekindle negotiations in the Rhinogydd – a truly special area of wild land. With the largest expanse of mountain heath outside of Scotland, it is the home of peregrine, merlin, hen harrier and raven, while the valleys hold important areas of species-rich oakwoods with their distinctive moss- and lichen-dominated ground flora. For geologists, this is the celebrated Harlech Dome – the greatest extent of Cambrian rock in the UK – its ancient and unusual rock formations thrusting proud of the surrounding land in jagged crags and cliffs.

## WORKING TOGETHER

It is not so much the size of the land being bought as its habitat quality that presents such an important opportunity. In time, there will be significant potential to work closely with others in the Rhinogydd, such as Snowdonia National Park, Natural Resources Wales, the Snowdonia Society, Woodland Trust, National Trust and North Wales Wildlife Trust, plus private landowners and local communities.

And it is precisely because the habitat is in good condition that the Trust will be able to focus its attention on this wider partnership and community work. Together with the existing John Muir Award officer, based in Llangollen in Denbighshire, acquiring this property will give the Trust a much stronger presence in Wales.

The Rhinogydd is a land steeped in history, with early settlers, Welsh warriors that fought with kings, and, more recently, poets and artists all shaped and inspired by its rugged landscape. Meirion Williams, the famous local hymn writer, probably had these very mountains in mind when he wrote 'Aros mae'r mynyddoedd mawr, rhio drostynt mae y gwynt' (meaning, the great mountains remain and the wind roars across them).

We hope the Trust will soon be able to make its own positive contribution to this remarkable landscape. □

## Further info

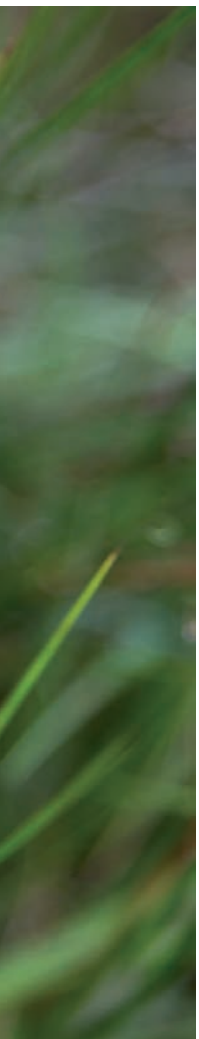
If you'd like to make a donation to the Trust's Carreg y Saeth Isaf appeal (and we hope you will), please see the enclosed leaflet, or visit [www.jmt.org/wales](http://www.jmt.org/wales)

## About the author

Dr Will Williams is a Trustee of the John Muir Trust. He can be contacted at [Will.llwynbedw@googlemail.com](mailto:Will.llwynbedw@googlemail.com)







Life in the landscape (clockwise from top): a rich mosaic of heath, rock and woodland; towards Carreg y Saeth Isaf from Cwm Bychan; native woodland and ferns; blaeberrys in amongst the heather; a peregrine; a common blue damselfy at Carreg y Saeth Isaf







PHOTOGRAPHY: LISA EVANS/FAULKIRK COUNCIL

## Dams on the doorstep

The outdoors provided inspiration for students at Larbert High School who have produced an e-book full of evocative writing following recent Award activity at a nearby nature reserve. **Rebecca Logsdon** explains

**NOT EVERY SCHOOL** is fortunate enough to have a nature reserve on its doorstep, but that's exactly the outdoor resource available to pupils at Larbert High School in Stenhousemuir. Set just beyond the confines of the school fence, the Carron Dams form a rich mosaic of woodland, wetland and fen habitats that are home to a range of wildlife – plus plenty of inspiration for those who come to explore.

The Dams are a legacy of the Carron Iron Company, first established in 1759 and which grew to become one of the largest producers of iron goods in Europe. The company's demise saw the lades and dams constructed to channel water from the River Carron to power its furnaces fall into disrepair, and the site was partially drained.

The original iron company logo features a phoenix – the mythical creature reborn from its own ashes – and the motto *Esto Perpetua* (Last Forever). It's an ideal metaphor for a site that was once the centre of heavy industry but which has now been reclaimed by nature and begun a new life following its designation in May as a local nature reserve, managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

With the reserve's potential as a valuable learning environment now recognised, the Dams have become well-known to students at the school, as this is where all first years Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share as part of

their Discovery level John Muir Award. Students are led through the Award by the Humanities department, although, this year, English was also connected with the project by 'sharing' experiences through various forms of writing. It's exactly the kind of cross-curricular approach to outdoor learning that is central to the future success of the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland.

"Pupils have responded to this opportunity with genuine enthusiasm and a growing respect for the environment," reports English teacher, Lorna Swinney. "I've been delighted by the response to an outdoor learning environment and feel that their writing and focus in English has improved as a result of engaging with nature."

Thanks to 'Live Literature' funding from the Scottish Book Trust, the English faculty at the school was able to employ the services of Chris Powici, an environmental poet and creative writing tutor at the University of Stirling, who guided the students through their creative exploration of the Dams. The very best writing – from essays to poetry – has been compiled in an ebook anthology, also called *Esto Perpetua*.

"First year pupils have written movingly and with real skill about their Dams adventures," explains Lorna. "This collection of writing celebrates their engagement with this unique environment, their willingness to share their experience and their new-found respect for an area that was previously neglected."

And it was an experience that, for some students, also altered perceptions. Having previously heard that the Dams were "a scary place because it is often dark and the trees shut out the light", Ryan Wilson found the Dams to be "one of the loveliest and most natural places I have ever seen".

We hope you enjoy the following short extracts from *Esto Perpetua*. The full collection of writing can be read at [www.bit.ly/estoperpetua](http://www.bit.ly/estoperpetua) □

**Creative talents:** students were guided in their writing by Chris Powici from the University of Stirling (above); a selection of images from the official opening of the Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve, plus extracts from *Esto Perpetua* (opposite)

### Curriculum for Excellence and the John Muir Award

The Curriculum for Excellence is the national curriculum for Scottish schools for learners from age 3 to 18. The John Muir Award offers an ideal structure to support pupils and teachers in their engagement with the Curriculum through outdoor learning. During 2012-2013, more than 300 primary, secondary and special schools were involved in delivering the Award in Scotland. [www.johnmuiraward.org](http://www.johnmuiraward.org)

### About the author

Rebecca Logsdon is the John Muir Award Scotland education manager. She can be contacted at [rebecca@johnmuiraward.org](mailto:rebecca@johnmuiraward.org)



The trees are the best my class  
 who will always be  
 with us - we are so  
 insignificant

So green and peaceful  
 The breathing hills my ears  
 The reflection of the sun  
 warms my body

Take a Memory  
 With You...

Down the Carron dams  
 everything is beautiful  
 children are set free

River water flows  
 birds call out in old green trees  
 talking to each other

It's a different world  
 you can smell damp and cold mud  
 down there changes you.

Lucie Hutchins

- These trees are ...  
an old couple, cuddling to keep warm.
- These trees are  
two sisters hugging.
- These trees are  
neighbours shaking hands.
- These trees are  
two best friends, linking arms.
- These trees are  
loud like children.
- These trees are  
mothers, protecting their babies.
- These trees are  
whispering secrets to each other.
- These trees are  
life, pointing to the stars.

Sophie MacAllister



is  
 see  
 out the  
 deep  
 when you might be lucky  
 there no person sees sometimes it appears  
 if you are  
 it will emerge  
 then slowly it will emerge  
 at them ref  
 it's  
 don't dare move  
 as the  
 don't dare move  
 as the  
 don't dare move  
 as the

Ashleigh Chan

Leaves scatter the ground  
 sounds like the crunch of new snow  
 the crackle of them.

Olivia Urquhart

A proud deer stands watch  
 birds flying through the fresh breeze  
 as the marsh sits still.

Luca Tomassi



# By leaves we live

**Susan Wright** reflects in words and pictures on an inspiring visit to the Trust's property in Knoydart

PHOTOGRAPHY: SUSAN WRIGHT

**LIFE DOESN'T GET MUCH** better than walking through mixed native woodland in 20 degrees plus of sunshine in Knoydart. In June this year, eight members took the opportunity to join a Wild Day to Li and Coire Dhorrcail – the parcel of land beside Loch Hourn owned and managed by the Trust since 1987. Led by Knoydart property manager Lester Standen, we met in Arnisdale at 8am for an exhilarating ride across the loch on the Trust's new boat (funded last year by the People's Postcode Lottery) and then a day's walk into Coire Dhorrcail.

Some 20 years ago, the Trust had to hand-plant native trees to kick start the regeneration of woodland in this sheep-shorn, ecologically devastated landscape. Today, Scots pine, oak, hazel, birch, rowan and juniper are all firmly established, their seeds dispersed by wind and animals to prompt natural regeneration beyond the bounds of the original fence-line. Deer now mix with the woodland, as they should, and so long as we can keep their numbers at a sustainable level they will continue to enjoy the food source, while trampling the heather and bracken and creating space for new seedlings to take hold. Seeing all this at first-hand, under clear blue skies, was a life-affirming experience that filled me with hope and optimism.

I was especially mesmerised by the zingy-green oak leaves, and was reminded how important trees are for shelter from the sun, wind and rain; how fantastic it is to hear bird song while walking; and the extra sense of adventure that trees impart as you weave past their varied barks and shapes, discovering new perspectives and fresh woodland life, before emerging onto higher ground and into dramatic coires.

The two days were worth every tick and midge bite – and every bit of criticism levelled at the Trust for working to deliver sustainable deer management and save our nation's woodlands. We hope you enjoy the picture tour on these pages. □



▲ Trees may eventually reach further into the mighty Coire Dhorrcail



▲ Deer fences – an imperfect solution for walkers, deer and woodland



▲ Camping in the company of trees and midges by Loch Hourn



#### About the author

Susan Wright is the Trust's head of communications. She can be contacted at [susan.wright@jmt.org](mailto:susan.wright@jmt.org)





▲ Trust members Linda, Alistair, Iain and Jack with the Trust boat



▼ Through the bluebells to look at the trees taking hold in the gorge

▶ An inspiring sight – sun illuminating the leaves of new oak trees



▼ Nature's choice – these birch trees have regenerated naturally as a cluster





# In the footsteps of Muir

As part of the Trust's celebration of John Muir's famous 1,000-mile walk, **Al Smith** took 'method' walking to new heights on a three-day expedition in the Cairngorms



PHOTOGRAPHY: AL SMITH



Settling in (clockwise from left): overnight camp in Glen Derry; lush pinewoods; early morning mist on Loch Etchachan; inside the Hutchison Memorial Hut; on Derry Cairngorm



**INSPIRED BY MUIR'S** own epic expedition from Indiana to Florida in 1867, and to tie in with the Year of Natural Scotland 'celebrate John Muir' theme, a group of Trust staff and trustees resolved to walk 1,000 miles on foot between them. Some of the journeys have been quite short, others much longer. Mine was somewhere in between – and with a twist.

Taking one of the challenges posed in the recently-launched *Mission: Explore John Muir* ebook as my cue – that of exploring in the style of a Victorian naturalist – my contribution involved a three-day trek in the Cairngorms dressed and equipped as Muir himself would have done on so many of his own wild sojourns. I also grew an excellent beard.

Mirroring Muir as much as possible, my

kit list was rather different to that which is carried by walkers today. It comprised:

- Wide-brimmed felt hat
- Cotton shirt
- Harris Tweed jacket and waistcoat
- Moleskin trousers
- Boots
- Woollen blanket
- Two small loaves of bread
- Small bag of tea
- Flint and steel
- Small bag of tinder
- Notebook and pencil
- A canvas shoulder bag to carry it all
- Wooden walking stick
- One exuberant collie called Jake

So as to avoid embarrassment, I also packed a map and compass and, at the

last minute, a mobile phone so that I could tweet on progress to the communications team in the office.

## SETTING OFF

The first day saw a long walk in from the Linn o' Dee to Glen Derry. There, I found a nice spot to spend the night and settled down in the glorious afternoon sun.

However, my first night proved interesting! Jake had trouble settling in the great outdoors and would sit up growling at every noise or smell that accosted his senses, waking me in the process. It was also quite cold, which again caused me to wake and writhe around a bit to get warm.

I awoke once more at 4am, shivering almost as much as Jake, to discover a light covering of frost had added a magical sparkle to the world. We had an early





┌ 'It is often said that the Cairngorms are best appreciated from the high tops where you can get a sense of the scale and grandeur of the landscape' ┐

breakfast, before setting off at 5am beneath cloudless blue skies, heading for Beinn Bhreac.

Once at the summit, it was then a great lollop across a huge moss, with dotterel and hare for company, to Beinn a' Choarainn (Hill of the rowan, although not one in sight!). It is often said that the Cairngorms are best appreciated from the high tops where you can get a sense of the scale and grandeur of the landscape. That was certainly the case here with great views across the central Cairngorms.

From Beinn a' Choarainn, we dropped steeply into the Lairig an Laoigh and then walked to Glen Derry to collect the kit I'd left at the previous night's camp, before heading back up the glen in blazing hot sun to the Hutchison Memorial Hut. After the discomfort of the first night, I had

decided to spend the night in a bothy to give the dog (and me!) some peace.

Up to this point - and throughout the journey - I had met very few people on the hill, with those encountered offering a varied response. Mostly it was just a greeting and a slightly puzzled look, but I did speak at length with a couple more who were very interested in the concept of travelling dressed and equipped as Muir.

One man who also stayed overnight in the bothy - himself an interesting character - didn't bat an eyelid. He was making his way to Faindouran bothy in Glen A'an to spend a week there and had been ferrying in supplies from Bob Scott's bothy near Derry Lodge to the Hutchison and then on to Faindouran - something he does every year for three weeks to escape from urban life in Manchester.

#### FINAL PUSH

The following morning saw another very early start, although again we enjoyed sunshine and clear blue skies as we headed into Coire Etchachan. From there, amidst wispy mist and cloud, it was a stomp up to the summit tors of Beinn Mheadhoin, where we saw more hares and dotterel wandering about. We enjoyed a nice little scramble up onto the summit tor, while a short detour on the descent provided wonderful views over Loch A'an and across to the Shelter Stone area.

A later climb to the summit of Derry Cairngorm was followed by a dry, hot and dusty descent to the glen, ending in cool, lush Caledonian pinewood before a long trek out to the Linn o' Dee. The trip

→ continued





Breathing it in: the still waters of Loch A'an (above); granite tors on Beinn Mheadhoin (below)



brought no great insights or outpourings, but more of a growing sense of calm and peace as time went on – and another 27 miles to add to the 1,000-mile journey log.

I enjoyed walking dressed as Muir, as it took me back to when I was younger and wore more natural materials – tweed breeches, cotton shirts and woolly jumpers. It was a reminder of how versatile these materials are, while the similarities of the colours I wore to the landscape all around felt earthy and grounding. I also found that the clothing adapted easily to the changes in temperature and would I'm sure have dealt well with the rain had there been any.

Perhaps surprisingly, the meagre rations were also fine, although I wouldn't like to go much longer just on bread! I had a couple of different types of loaves and rationed them out each day and never seemed to get too hungry.

The pace at which I travelled probably also helped: having so much time meant I could saunter along, so conserving energy. And it was the pace that was perhaps the most remarkable thing about the whole journey; just setting out with a vague-ish plan of where I was going with no time constraints was incredibly liberating, with a growing sense of shedding the many layers of 'stuff' we surround ourselves with. ☐

#### FURTHER INFO

A version of this article first appeared on the John Muir Award's 1,000-mile journey blog site, which contains accounts of many other interesting journeys.

[www.tinyurl.com/jm1000](http://www.tinyurl.com/jm1000)

#### MUIR MISSIONS

Exploring in the style of a Victorian naturalist is one of 20 challenges set in the Trust's new e-book, *Mission: Explore John Muir*, which encourages people to follow in the footsteps of John Muir.

[www.tinyurl.com/mejmbk](http://www.tinyurl.com/mejmbk)

#### About the author

Al Smith is a John Muir Award manager and outdoor learning officer for the Cairngorms National Park Authority. He can be contacted at [cairngorms@johnmuiraward.org](mailto:cairngorms@johnmuiraward.org)





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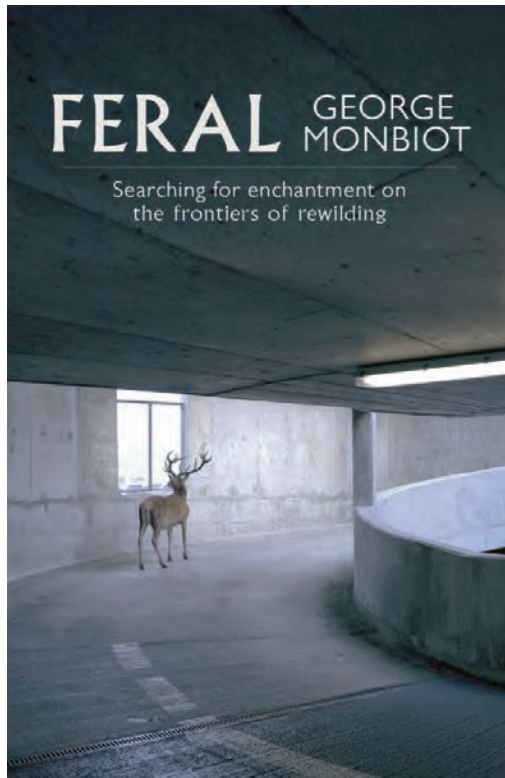
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## Feral: Searching for enchantment on the frontiers of rewilding, George Monbiot

**Mike Daniels is struck by the relevance of this important new title to the work of the Trust**

**IT'S NOT OFTEN** when a book comes out that has such instant resonance and immediate relevance to the vision and work of the John Muir Trust, but that's certainly the case with this latest title from George Monbiot. Not only does it explore a key area of the Trust's mission – to enhance wild land through the restoration of natural processes – but also clearly sets out the positive case for doing so.

The book highlights a variety of serious challenges, from the way our degraded landscapes are currently gardened in the name of 'favourable condition', to our lack of ambition in returning missing species that are vital for rewilding our ecosystems. Why do we spend such vast sums of public money subsidising farming and fishing industries that support relatively few jobs and cause such widespread damage? And why are we so scared of nature?

For those unclear as to what rewilding is – or what it might look like – Monbiot offers a range of definitions. My favourite is 'after silent spring comes raucous summer!' Or how about: 'rewilding – a rawer and richer future' as a strapline? Of course, for Trust members this is not a new topic or concept; since its inception, the Trust has advocated that nature be allowed to do its own thing. Our vision concurs that '... re-wilding, unlike conservation, has no fixed objective. It is driven not by human management but by natural processes.'

And Monbiot presents a compelling case to support us in our own rewilding mission. He details how, by allowing our wild lands to regenerate, both nature and people can reap rich rewards. The sheer biodiversity offered by healthy native woodlands, riparian woodlands and montane scrub would drastically improve the impoverished communities of insects, plants and animals provided by the two-dimensional upland landscapes we currently have, where the only bits 'not grazed to the roots by sheep are those grazed to the roots by deer'. As the author points out, you only need to 'spend two hours in a bushy suburban garden and you will see more birds of more species than walking for five miles in the uplands.'

With rewilding as much about people as nature, the vision presented here is of a 'rewilding of human life ... not a retreat from nature but a re-engagement'. The author highlights an alarming statistic that, since the 1970s, the physical area children play in has reduced by 90%. Climbing trees has been replaced by climbing frames (which of course must be tested and inspected). The John Muir Award, which works so hard to bring people – especially young people – and nature closer together, forms a first step towards this re-engagement.

The biggest challenge of all is to remove the fear of rewilding that seems to exist amongst politicians and the wider public. Monbiot describes how EU agricultural rules view re-wilding as 'abandonment', while the National Farmers Union Scotland goes further when it states that: 'Fewer sheep mean under-grazing of traditional pastures, loss of biodiversity, a return of bracken and brash and the potential irreparable damage to Scotland's beautiful landscapes.'

And when it comes to large carnivores, this fear verges on irrational terror. The UK is the largest country in Europe that no longer possesses any large carnivores, yet is the most reluctant to bring them back. Wolves have recently returned, under their own steam from neighbouring countries, to France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, while their numbers have increased in Italy, Spain and Poland. According to Monbiot, statistics from such countries suggest people are far more likely to be killed by the wrong type of slipper (leading to falls down stairs) than through being attacked by a wolf.

As a rallying call for what the Trust is all about, I leave you with the following quote from the book and strongly recommend you to read it: 'The Twentieth Century has been characterised by destruction and degradation. Environmentalists, in seeking to arrest this carnage, have been clear about what people should not do ... now we need to be clear about what we want ... to show where hope lies.' □

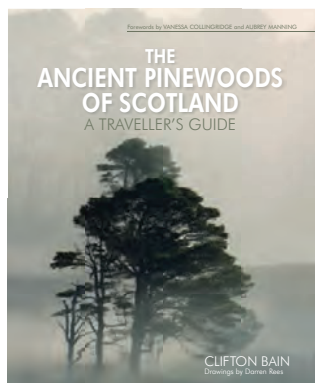
Allen Lane (an imprint of Penguin Books)  
2013, £20.00  
[www.penguin.co.uk](http://www.penguin.co.uk)

### The Reviewer

Mike Daniels is the Trust's head of land and science. He can be contacted at [mike.daniels@jmt.org](mailto:mike.daniels@jmt.org)



**The Ancient Pinewoods of Scotland: A Traveller's Guide, Clifton Bain**  
Reviewed by Jim Crumley



The author, a professional conservationist whose CV includes policy officer with the RSPB and director of the IUCN's UK Peatland Programme, has come up with an intriguing and original wheeze: a how-to-get-there-and-what-you-will-find account of all 38 of Scotland's ancient pinewoods – without a car.

He calls it 'A Traveller's Guide'. Hmm, guidebooks tend to be small, light, and often waterproof, so that they can survive in a rucksack in, say, Scottish pinewood weather. But this book is coffee table in size and production values (very good colour on every page, gorgeous cover photo by Laurie Campbell), and it feels as if it must weigh about the same as it costs.

The information is detailed, its maps useful, and its central idea is frankly inspired. As a traipsing of pinewoods myself, and no great enthusiast of guidebooks, I wandered through these pages thinking "ooh ... didn't know there was a pinewood *there*" and "oh ... didn't know about *that*".

So, in one way, it does its job well. But £25 for a traveller's guide that realistically won't travel further from the coffee table than the book shelf is certainly a daring publishing venture. It's good, it looks better than good. I'm just not quite sure who it's for.

Sandstone Press 2013, £24.99  
[www.sandstonepress.com](http://www.sandstonepress.com)

**Snowdon: The Story of a Welsh Mountain, Jim Perrin**  
Reviewed by Dr Will Williams



Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa), the highest peak in Wales, has inspired many and certainly the author of this book, Jim Perrin. In fact, he is able to draw on a lifetime of walking and climbing to help bring the mountain to life in a most captivating way.

Perrin will be familiar to many Trust members, not least through his regular articles in *TGO* magazine. For those who have climbed Snowdon, this book will add much to the experience; for those who have not, it would be worth slipping into your rucksack (alongside your waterproofs!) when you do.

The narrative focuses on the human and cultural life imprinted on Snowdon, although for those interested in the natural history there are also key references to follow up. The mountain is introduced via a two-day, 15-mile circumnavigation – a novel and appreciative way to experience the geography of the landscape over which it towers so elegantly.

Snippets of detail that many of us are already aware of are lovingly presented and moulded into a cohesive whole, with the story of the mountain told through the eyes of early settlers, fairies, Welsh princes, travellers, climbers, poets and those who have worked the surrounding land over time.

Exploring more modern preoccupations, the author reflects on Snowdon's volume of recreational use, the proliferation of man-made paths and adornments – including the mountain railway – and accepts the management and maintenance necessary to facilitate such a high level of use.

Overall, it is a gem – a wonderful book that takes readers through the struggles, achievements and experiences of people through the ages in this spectacular corner of Wales.

Gomer 2012, £14.99  
[www.gomer.co.uk](http://www.gomer.co.uk)

**Wild Space best-sellers**



Business has been brisk at the Trust's new Wild Space visitor centre in Pitlochry since it opened in April, with visitors making the most of the outstanding range of books available. Here are some of the top sellers to date:

**Journeys in the Wilderness – a John Muir reader, £12.99**

A wonderful collection of Muir's books and writings, including his novels *My Boyhood and Youth* and *First Summer in the Sierra*.

**The Many Days: Selected Poems of Norman MacCaig, £9.99**

MacCaig loved the landscape of Assynt making his poetry essential reading for anyone fond of this glorious corner of the northwest Highlands.

**Wild – an Elemental Journey,**

Jay Griffiths, £9.99

A unique, compelling travel book in pursuit of the savage and the wild – and what that really means.

**Caledonia – Scotland's Heart of Pine, Peter Cairns & Niall**

Benzie, £22.00

Captivating images and inspiring words combine in a portrait of Scotland's ancient woodlands and the creatures that live within them

**The Last Wolf,**

Jim Crumley, £9.99

Forthright as ever, Crumley addresses what he sees as the unfair demonisation of a top predator through the centuries

**High Light – A Vision of Wild Scotland, Colin Prior, £30.00**

Prior's extraordinary attention to detail has resulted in a stunning collection of images.

For much more on the Trust's Wild Space visitor centre, visit [www.jmt.org/wildspace.asp](http://www.jmt.org/wildspace.asp)





## As nature intended

A recent survey has highlighted the success of path restoration work at Schiehallion over the past decade – with striking ‘before and after’ photos demonstrating how a once heavily-eroded trail has returned to a more natural state, writes **Dan Bailey**

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Looking over the summit of Schiehallion to Loch Rannoch

**IN 2005, THE JOHN MUIR TRUST** opened a new path from the Braes of Foss car park up the south-eastern flank of Schiehallion to a point at around 780m where the path becomes an undefined rocky route along the ridge to the summit. It replaced a route that had developed from the car park up a peat-based coire which was so heavily eroded that some of the upper sections suffered from muddy peat braiding up to 70m wide in places.

As part of the preparation for ‘healing’ the scar of the old path, the Trust engaged ecologist Neil Bayfield to undertake a rapid survey technique study of the path in July 2003. In July of this year – the tenth anniversary of the survey – volunteers replicated many of the original photographs. The results speak for themselves (see opposite).

“Since the new path opened on Schiehallion ten years ago the number of walkers using the old route has dropped

almost to zero,” explains Sandy Maxwell, the Trust’s conservation manager for East Schiehallion & Glenlude. “The Trust has put a lot of work into restoring the old path which was an ugly scar on the side of this popular Munro.”

Over the course of several work parties, the lower sections of the path were reprofiled by volunteers. Turf and stone water bars were constructed to shed water off the path line, islands of vegetation between braids were dug off and the edges of eroded sections dropped. Elsewhere, the surface was raked over and spot-turfed in places. Today, while the line of the old path can still be discerned, much of it is largely covered by vegetation, with no new signs of water scouring.

The upper sections were worked on in a similar but larger scale with the Trust initially using a contractor with a digger to recreate a series of run-offs for the water and to bring some of the surrounding turf

back into the path surface. In recent years, volunteers have carried out occasional spot-turfing on some of the still bare areas, but while these turfs have almost all taken, the rate of growth at such altitude is slow.

“Since 2004, the work to continue reintroducing spot turfs and re-profiling the lower sections has been done by volunteer work parties,” says Sandy, who also serves as the Trust’s volunteer work parties co-ordinator. “We run around eight days of volunteering with an average of 14 people per day each year to both maintain the new path on Schiehallion and continue the re-vegetation on the old line.” □

### About the author

Dan Bailey is an outdoor writer/photographer and editor of [www.ukhillwalking.com](http://www.ukhillwalking.com), where a version of this article first appeared.



# Before and after

PHOTOGRAPHY  
BEFORE: NEIL BAYFIELD AFTER: MARY JONES



Much can happen in 10 years: the lower section of the old path in particular has returned to a much more natural state



Elsewhere, the line of the old path is blending into the surrounding moorland



Even at higher altitudes, the difference is striking



## FURTHER INFO

Acquired by the John Muir Trust in 1998, East Schiehallion covers an area of 871 hectares (2,153 acres), which includes the eastern part of Schiehallion as well as the quieter and wilder Gleann Mòr to the south. At 1,083 metres (3,547 feet), Schiehallion is one of Highland Perthshire's most popular Munros. [www.tinyurl.com/jmtesa](http://www.tinyurl.com/jmtesa)

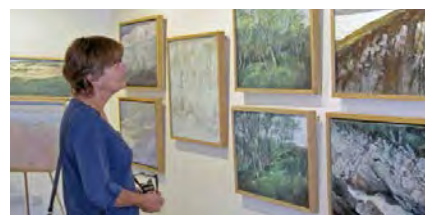
The Trust would like to thank the Heritage Lottery Fund once more for providing the bulk of funding for the path restoration work at Schiehallion.

**‘Since 2004, the work to continue reintroducing spot turfs and re-profiling the lower sections has all been done by volunteer work parties’**





Force of nature (clockwise from left): David with one of his avalanche paintings; a visitor enjoying the exhibition at Wild Space; another powerful wintry scene



## Cold calling

David Fulford's expressive landscapes are captivating visitors to the Trust's new Wild Space visitor centre in Pitlochry. **Nicky McClure** learns about his approach and inspirations

### How long have you been painting?

I've wanted to be an artist since the age of eight when I used to paint watercolours on the back of old Christmas cards. I painted animals and spitfires, all from memory. Later I went to art school and then taught art for 30 years in northeast England and in Jamaica.

### And your preferred media?

I mostly work in oils. I want to capture a sense of place – I love paint and like to work with it to make it fit the experience. Although my work is fairly eclectic, fundamentally I consider myself to be a landscape painter. These days I mainly make paintings about mountains, having visited many fantastic mountain landscapes in recent years – from Everest to the Rockies and the volcanoes of Japan and Stromboli to the glaciers of Iceland and Alaska. I'm absolutely full of sublime thoughts about these places.

### How do you like to work?

I work in my studio – painting *en plein air* is harder than people imagine. I make very large, near abstract landscapes.

My best work comes from very strong memories and emotional connections to my subject matter. For years I've had a deep interest in the environment. My son lives in Denver, and I've been inspired by some amazing places in Colorado, in particular the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. This is a fantastic place, deeper than the Grand Canyon, that reveals millennia of geological history through marvellous patterns of strata. I love to find myself walking in the footsteps of John Muir and have been to the John Muir Glacier in Alaska. His account of discovering it is astonishing.



During a trip to Nepal I was involved in some serious avalanche near-misses. We were coming down a gorge from the Annapurna Sanctuary when there were five massive avalanches. For hours, enormous boulders of ice crashed down from thousands of feet above us. I'd never before had a near-death experience so profound that I just ended up being very, very calm. The end result was that I did a lot of paintings when I came back – large paintings of being in those avalanches. I didn't have any photographs to look at; I just painted it out of my head. I think they are my finest to date.

### How would you describe your work?

My larger paintings have a strong structure and are essentially abstract. My latest work is smaller and more overtly realistic. It is the result of going to the far north of Scotland, which I try to visit a few times every year. Those visits keep me sane. The call of the north is powerful.

### What next?

I am working on large abstracts about calving glaciers in Alaska – trying to work out how you make coldness feel cold in paint.

### Any tips for would-be painters of wild landscape?

Be as bold as you can. Look at artists like Barbara Rae, Joan Eardley, Kurt Jackson and Len Tabner for inspiration, and have a go. I have a belief that painting can actually reveal things. Schopenhauer thought that human beings saw things through a mist or veil, but that creative people were able to get occasional glimpses of a deeper reality. And there are artists nowadays, such as Ian McKeever, whose paintings epitomise that struggle to see through into some other aspects of reality that we can't normally grasp.

### What do you think of the Wild Space?

I'm really pleased to see that it's bringing so many people in and exposing them to the potential of wild land. The video is lovely and the space is developing into a fantastic place to buy books and related things. Personally, I'd love to see even more of Muir's writings as I find him so inspiring. □

### Further info

David Fulford's paintings of Sandwood and Assynt are on show at the Trust's Wild Space visitor centre in Pitlochry until 9 October. For more on David's work, visit [www.slowlooking.com](http://www.slowlooking.com)

### About the author

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# John Muir (1838-1914)

## Five reasons why he inspires us ...

### HE DEMONSTRATED A LOVE OF WILD LAND AND OF THE NATURAL WORLD

“All that the sun shines on is beautiful, so long as it is wild.”

*The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West*

Throughout his life, Muir was drawn to wild places. He revelled in all aspects of the natural world, from detailing the smallest insect to bathing in sublime vistas and experiencing imposing mountain scenery. He would argue with the likes of John Burroughs over who loved nature the most and, although he would spend time away, Muir would always feel the pull of the wild calling him back to the mountains and forests of the American wilderness.

### HE ARGUED FOR THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF NATURE

“Surely a better time must be drawing nigh when godlike human beings will become truly humane, and learn to put their animal fellow mortals in their hearts instead of on their backs or in their dinners.”

*Story of My Boyhood and Youth*

At a time when society saw nature's value in terms of the material and economic benefits it offered, Muir presented a different perspective: that the natural world had a value that wasn't dependent on its use by humans and that mankind should occupy a place that was a part of nature, rather than having dominion over it.

### HE ARGUED FOR THE RESTORATIVE AND SPIRITUAL EFFECTS OF EXPERIENCING NATURE AND WILDERNESS

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike.”

*The Yosemite*

In a world where nature's benefits to humans still tend to be expressed in economic terms, Muir's view on the value of wildness offers a relevant and important perspective on our relationship with nature. He argued that experience of nature was an essential part of human existence and that, by visiting wild lands and escaping civilisation, it is possible to recharge mind and body.

### HE WANTED TO EDUCATE PEOPLE ABOUT THE WONDERS OF THE NATURAL WORLD AND INSPIRE PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE IT FOR THEMSELVES

“I care to live only to entice people to look at Nature's loveliness.”

*Letter to Mrs Ezra S Carr*

Despite finding the writing process difficult - he preferred to be in the wilderness, rather than writing about it - Muir felt it part of his life's mission to educate others about the wonders of the natural world. In his writing, Muir tried to convey his love and interpretation of the natural world but also included scientific facts, aiming to advance the knowledge of the reader. In doing so, he hoped to inspire others to experience the wilderness for themselves and to care about the natural world as he did.

### HE CAMPAIGNED FOR THE PROTECTION OF WILD PLACES

“Government protection should be thrown around every wild grove and forest on the mountains, as it is around every private orchard, and the trees in public parks.”

*John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*

Muir's contribution to the conservation movement - in America and across the world - shouldn't be underestimated. He was influential in the formation of several of America's national parks; helped to found the now hugely influential Sierra Club; and was one of the first to suggest that conservation could be justified on the grounds of the intrinsic value to be found in natural places and the spiritual and health benefits that wild places bring to those who visit them. Today, his articles and books continue to encourage people to visit wild places and remain an inspiration for those who fight to preserve such places for future generations.





# Dram, fine, splendid

*...need we say more!*



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