JOHN MUIR TRUST
JOURNAL

77 AUTUMN 2024

Scaling up

Introducing the Nevis Nature Network

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22

21

32

PHOTOGRAPHY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): MICHAEL SOUTER; ADOBESTOCK; SISI

COVER: WOODLAND REGENERATION ALONG GLEN NEVIS © JAMES SHOOTER/SCOTLANDBIGPICTURE.COM

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Renewal and growth

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

WELCOME to the autumn 2024 issue of the *Journal*, which is packed full of informative updates and thought-provoking features.

When I introduced the last issue, in spring, the Trust was facing significant financial challenges. We have come through a tough ten months and I am pleased to report that our finances are now in a stronger position. In addition, we have filled all senior vacancies – with one remaining post, Director of Policy, for which we are interviewing – bringing diverse skills and experience into the Trust.

The threats to wild places have not gone away, and the challenges of the wider financial climate remain. But the positive news is that the Trust has adapted and we have a strategy in place to deliver our ambitions with a team of experienced and dedicated professionals.

In April, the Trustee Board agreed 11 objectives to provide stronger alignment with our charitable purpose – to conserve and protect wild places for the benefit of present and future generations. The Trust's wider management team worked together over the summer to develop outcomes for each of these objectives.

Prioritisation of the outcomes was agreed by the Board in early September, and this is informing the shape of a three-year, fully costed operational plan, currently in preparation. This will be finalised in December and be supported by a detailed fundraising plan.

NATURAL PROCESSES

The focus of our work will be on advocating and celebrating land where natural processes are free to thrive. The aspiration is to have these areas protected formally. There is currently no statutory designation for wild places, and as a society we are at risk of losing our connection with what natural processes and landscapes look like. Read more about how this is directing our work and how it will help everyone appreciate our landscapes, on page nine.

While financial challenges earlier this year required us to slow the pace of some projects, our staff team has been progressing work in line with what is financially viable. One such example is at Strathaird on the Isle of Skye – with much more detail on page 16.

I'm very pleased to report that our approach to deer management across the land we care for is also showing impact through encouraging evidence of tree regeneration. While reviewing progress on Quinag in August I was delighted to see willow, alder and holly growth. And last month it was equally pleasing to see strong regeneration of aspen on Knoydart, and a burst of birch seedlings covering the ground on the walk into Coire Dhorrcail.

PARTNERSHIP

To achieve long-term success at landscape scale requires effective partnership. And that's exactly what we are doing through an exciting new nature restoration partnership project at Nevis that will provide the coherence needed to bring sustainable change to the area's landscape and biodiversity – see page 12 for more.

All of this work is made possible by the generosity of our Members. We received an incredible response to the launch of the Vital Appeal, and we are extending it this autumn to enable us to respond according to our strategic priorities. You will find the latest Vital Appeal leaflet with this issue.

Thank you very much for all your ongoing support, it means the world to us and to the wild places we are working so hard to protect.

David Balharry
Chief Executive, John Muir Trust

Park life

As Scotland prepares to designate a third national park, a recent report questions whether such status is delivering for nature

The UK's network of national parks is once again in the spotlight with the Scottish Government's recent announcement that Galloway has been chosen as the preferred site for Scotland's next national park (see interview, page 34).

Announcing the decision, the Scottish Government lauded the proposal as being community-led, supported by many local businesses and with a strong case for what such designation would bring for residents and the local economy. It was also highlighted as a means of helping to tackle the nature and climate crises.

If given official designation, following further consultation into its suitability, Galloway would become the first new national park in the UK for around 15 years, and only the third in Scotland.

Concerns have been raised, however, about what national park status generally delivers for nature, with a recent Health Check Report, published by the Campaign for National Parks in England and Wales, highlighting how nature is still struggling in many areas.

The report revealed that just 6 per cent of national parks in England and Wales are being managed effectively for nature.

It also found that, in 2022, just 39 per cent of rivers and 15 per cent of lakes within national parks in England achieved good ecological status or higher.

Latest available data for Wales (2021) showed that only 51 per cent of rivers and 21 per cent of lakes in the country's three national parks achieved good overall status or higher.

The report also highlighted how, in the last five years, 56 out of 62 incidents of raptor crime reported in national parks took place in just three of them: the Peak District, North York Moors and the Yorkshire Dales – with strong evidence linking grouse shooting with raptor persecution.

See page 33 for details of a biography of Ethel Haythornthwaite, the pioneering campaigner for national park status

PHOTOGRAPH: LISA HOOPER

The proposed new national park includes the coast path north of Portpatrick

Study outlines deer carcass benefits

A new study by researchers at the University of Edinburgh has revealed that the removal of deer carcasses after culling deprives land of essential nutrients.

Using nationwide cull data on four species of deer – red, roe, fallow and sika – between 2010 and 2022, researchers estimated levels of phosphorus, nitrogen and calcium for each deer species based on their average body and antler size. It was calculated that 251,188kg of calcium, 195,652kg of nitrogen and 152,834kg of phosphorus are lost across Scotland each year.

The research team says that the loss of calcium has a bigger environmental impact than loss of nitrogen or phosphorus. Low-calcium soils can hinder commercial and native woodland regeneration, and can have knock-on effects for birds' eggs, which experience declines in shell thickness.

Golden eagle feeding on a deer carcass (captured by remote camera)

The study also noted that carcasses bring additional ecosystem benefits, such as providing a food source for small predators including pine martens. Carcasses have also been shown to distract predators from ground-nesting birds, such as capercaillie, during the breeding season.

Chris Hirst, co-author of the study at the University of Edinburgh's Roslin Institute, said: "Our findings will help guide evidence-based recommendations for deer and nutrient management to better protect Scotland's plans for large-scale ecosystem recovery and sustainable wildlife management."

See also page 16 of the spring 2024 edition of the *Journal* which explains the Trust's approach to and reasons for sometimes leaving carcasses on the hill. For more on the research, see **www.ed.ac.uk/research-innovation**

Trust escalates mast concerns

A coalition of rural, wildlife and conservation bodies including the Trust, has written a joint letter to Sir Chris Bryant MP, Minister of State for Digital and Data Infrastructure, asking the Government to review the 'Total Not-Spot' element of the Shared Rural Network programme put in place by the previous administration.

The Shared Rural Network programme is a collaboration between the UK Government and four big mobile phone operators, which aims to achieve 95 per cent 4G mobile phone coverage across Britain.

The Partial Not-Spot (PNS) programme is improving coverage and making seamless connectivity a reality for many users in communities across Scotland.

In Scotland, there are 260 sites classified as Total Not-Spots (TNS), which are often selected to provide landmass coverage and meet the geographical targets of the programme, rather than prioritising coverage for communities or transport routes.

This has resulted in a scenario where extremely remote and ecologically fragile areas are set to accommodate unnecessary masts, along with related infrastructure and access roads, leaving a significant mark on these unique wild places.

The coalition has said that the agreement between different organisations, with diverse interests, highlights the need for a review and to assess how the financial resources behind this segment of the Shared Rural Network programme can be better used.

Thomas Widrow, Head of Campaigns for the Trust, said: "As a charity whose purpose is to protect wild places, we are alarmed that damage will be inflicted on landscapes and wildlife with no evident public or environmental benefits.

"Rural communities and outdoor enthusiasts alongside environmental organisations are speaking with one voice – we need connectivity where we live and work, not in our most fragile and remote wild places."

Join us for wild talks and walks!

Friday, 25 October, Charterhouse Heritage Park, Coventry
Matthew Frith, Director of Conservation at the London Wildlife Trust, will lead a nature walk and talk alongside Gareth Morgan, the Trust's Regional Delivery Manager. Book tickets at **tinyurl.com/ycxnmuhy**

Saturday, 2 November, Augustine United Church, Edinburgh
Special guest, adventurer and writer John Burns (pictured) will take the audience on a story adventure to wild places, followed by updates on the Trust's work. Book tickets at **tinyurl.com/59z34v2d**

Members and non-members are very welcome at both events but please book in advance. See **johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/events** for more details.

A moth trap used in the surveys

Thirlmere moths

Moth surveys carried out across four locations at Thirlmere this summer identified the presence of more than 200 species of moth.

The surveys were undertaken to provide valuable baseline records ahead of planned woodland restoration work on site.

All surveys were carried out by Isaac Johnston, the Trust's Thirlmere Resilience Project Officer, who commented: "It was exciting to see such a broad range of species. We found one moth, Satin lutestring (pictured), which is quite rare and lives in long-established oak woodland."

See page 26 for more on the Trust's partnership work at Thirlmere.

Satin lutestring

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISAAC JOHNSTON

Let's get digital

As part of our systems improvement, the Trust is transitioning to a new Membership database. This will mean that all Members signed up to receive mailings online will begin to receive our monthly e-newsletter. Please help us to become even more sustainable by signing up to receive electronic communications. To do so, visit **johnmuirtrust.org/newsletter**

Dismay over cuts to key fund

The Scottish Government has confirmed that it will cut its Nature Restoration Fund by £5m. The Nature Restoration Fund has been critical in helping to deliver projects across rural and urban Scotland, generating employment and bringing benefits to people, local economies, biodiversity and nature.

"Defunding nature restoration in Scotland would interrupt our ability to protect wild places and quickly worsen the erosion of these vital and already fragile habitats," said Thomas Widrow, Head of Campaigns at the Trust.

"Protecting wild places and biodiversity provides public benefit by preventing flooding, keeping our air and water clean, and helping to achieve our carbon targets."

However, there is an alternative to bring in extra cash for nature restoration. Earlier this year the Scottish Government announced a range of measures to tackle emissions, and one of those was a commitment to consult on the Trust's carbon land tax proposal for very large estates.

Scotland is rich in land that could lock up vast amounts of carbon, while contributing to biodiversity. However, much of that land is still in a very poor state, emitting greenhouse gases when it should be a huge carbon sink.

Restoring just 75 per cent of that damaged peatland and allowing native forest cover to reach 20 per cent of its maximum capacity would take out the emission equivalent of every Scottish car on every road in the country, plus some more.

The Trust is asking the Scottish Government to introduce a Carbon Emissions Land Tax, based on two fundamental principles. First, that large estates have a responsibility to manage land in the public interest – for nature, climate and communities. And second, that polluters should pay.

To date, more than 50 organisations, groups, churches, businesses, trade unions and coalitions have joined the call for a Carbon Emissions Land Tax. Together, they represent over a million people in Scotland.

You can add your voice by signing the petition for a Carbon Emissions Land Tax at **johnmuirtrust.org/CELT**

PHOTOGRAPH: ALI AUSTIN

Peatland restoration at Nevis

PHOTOGRAPH: SONYA BARNES

A sea of litter

Litter remains a significant problem for the marine environment, with the extent of the issue often reflected in the sheer amount of items that build up on the beaches around Sandwood Bay in north west Scotland.

Visitors to Sandwood have been gathering the litter into small piles (pictured) in an attempt to help with a clear up, but the difficulty is getting the litter off the beach as it is a four-mile walk to the nearest road.

"Much of the litter comes in from the sea rather than visitors' litter on the beaches," commented Sonya Barnes, the Trust's Warden for Sandwood Bay. "It gets replenished every high tide and particularly after a storm.

"It is frustrating to see in this age of increased environmental awareness. It's all rather depressing."

Nature loss poll

According to a new poll conducted by the Diffley Partnership, 8 in 10 people in Scotland have noticed environmental harm in their local area.

A total of 45 per cent of respondents said they had noticed the impact of nature loss, such as fewer birds or insects, and 58 per cent believed that their local area was vulnerable to climate change, with coastal areas judged to be most vulnerable.

Having joined more than 40 other organisations in backing Scotland Loves Nature – a campaign that called for the Scottish Government's new Programme for Government to include statutory targets to restore nature – the Trust has welcomed the government's commitment to introducing a Natural Environment Bill in the coming parliamentary year that will do just that.

Seeing wild

Wendy Grindle and Thomas Widrow explore what we mean by 'wild' and how it is directing the Trust's work

'WILD' has been harnessed by marketers to create appeal for brands and to sell products and services, from coffee and deodorant to luxury clothing and more.

It wasn't always this way. Throughout most of history wild was seen by many as threatening and dangerous. Generations were brought up on stories like *Little Red Riding Hood*. For some cultures today there remain negative connotations around wild. Environmental historian Harriet Ritvo points out that the emotional response to what wild means to us has altered over time. She says that "as wildness has come to seem less threatening and more threatened, people have come to like it better".

This statement neatly articulates the challenge the John Muir Trust has set out to address – wild places are under threat from constant attrition, and as a society we are increasingly at risk of losing our connection with what natural processes and landscapes look and feel like.

Through generational change our understanding of what wild looks like is constantly shifting, as more and more of the attributes associated with the wild are lost. This includes through the mass industrialisation of rural landscapes, be it with ill-placed telecoms masts or wind turbines and related infrastructure.

To protect what we mean by wild effectively, we need to be able to define and measure what we are talking about with a common and accessible language. Our staff team and Board have started to address this by defining wild places as being 'areas where natural processes are able to thrive' and creating new contemporary measures of what characterises wild places.

HUMAN-MADE LANDSCAPES

Within the UK we protect our landscapes through a series of local, national and international designations. We tend to favour a system that protects 'features' that are the product of an interaction between humans and the biophysical environment; in essence, it celebrates a human-made landscape.

The discussion on conservation philosophy that took place between John Muir, founding father of US National Parks, and Gifford Pinchot, founding father of the US Forest Service, in the late 19th Century resonates today. Pinchot's views are recorded as representing a utilitarian approach to conservation that reflected humanity's overt management of the environment. That approach seems to fit with the UK's current designation system.

On the other hand, Muir's philosophy represents the desire to secure landscapes for nature and their natural beauty. In advocating for wild places Muir led with two key arguments: one was their inherent experiential value and the other that "they provide pristine environments that enable measurement of external human influence by means of comparison with other areas".

The challenge facing the Trust is whether UK society sees value in restoring and protecting some areas of land "for nature and its natural beauty" – how much land, and where, depends on wider society.

Our strategy is designed to address that challenge, first by explaining the issues, and then asking that question of a wider audience.

The Trust today believes that wild places are vital for two reasons similar to those advanced by Muir. Firstly, they provide a window enabling us to see what nature is doing as it evolves and adapts. Secondly, wild places and the attributes of wild places make us feel something special – wildness – the idea that humans are one filament in a web of life, dependent on the

PHOTOGRAPH: IAIN BROWNLIE ROY

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integrity of the whole of the web, and vulnerable if not living in harmony with it.

Experiencing that feeling is essential to our wellbeing – grounding us in the wider world and creating the strongest bonds with nature. This in turn prompts us to look after and give back to wild places and protect and defend them when needed.

Psychologist Eric Fromm and biologist Edward O. Wilson used evolutionary psychology to argue that our fascination and affiliation with the wild is an evolutionary process. This thinking observes that a human rupture from the wild first came in the neolithic period with earliest farming societies, then during the industrial revolution with the move to urbanisation. This hypothesis, known as biophilia, has been used over the past three decades by psychologists, biologists, educationists and public health academics.

It is argued that the imprint of wild remains deep within our psyche and is crucial for our early development and ongoing mental and physical health. As we move further from our natural affiliation with wild places, we compromise our health and a fundamental part of what it means to be human.

PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL SOUTER

WILD ATTRIBUTES

We have established that wild places have 'attributes' associated with sight, sound, remoteness, ecology and presence or absence of human intervention. These attributes can be plotted on a scale to measure the physical and ecological attributes that make up a landscape and record changes over time. Once developed fully, the wild attributes scale will be piloted on the land which is in our care.

However, wild places are not only defined by their physical characteristics; they also affect humans deeply on an emotional level. This is why the Trust is developing a second tool that focuses on perceptions within society and their inter-generational change. Currently at an early stage of development, it might be based on the Wild Places Survey conducted in 2023 and will measure the perceptual and experiential elements of a wild place.

Together, the wild attributes and this second tool will enable the Trust to populate a Wild Places Register and monitor the state of wild places across the UK over the years.

The Register will provide landowners with a clear understanding of what actions they can take to improve the wild attributes of the land in their care. It will also give the wider public the knowledge required to read the landscape themselves and understand what makes a place wild.

And finally, it will provide decision-makers with evidence which the Trust and its partners across the environmental movement will be able to use to push for policies and legislation that benefit and protect wild places.

This exciting new work is at an early stage and will form the core of our activity over the next few years. Keep an eye on our website to follow our progress and for opportunities to get involved.

About the authors
Wendy Grindle is the Trust's Director of Communications, Engagement and Marketing. Thomas Widrow is the Trust's Head of Campaigns

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX GILLESPIE

Taking care (clockwise from main): Schiehallion from Loch Rannoch; walkers on the Sandwood path; purple saxifrage, Nevis; Ardvar woodland at Quinag (previous page)

"As we move further from our natural affiliation with wild places, we compromise our health and a fundamental part of what it means to be human"

Exploring wild attributes

The list of wild attributes will be developed over the next year and tested and refined on Trust land. We will then offer the tool to partner landowning organisations so they can monitor the state of wild places in their care too.

The tool will function as a set of scales that measure different aspects of the geographical and ecological attributes of wild places. For example, one scale will measure the presence of built features such as contemporary buildings and infrastructure, fences and roads. The measure will be taken as a distance from the point of observation. If there is a road less than 100m away, the area surveyed will be classed as a 1 out of 10. If the nearest built feature is between 5 and 10 km away it will rank as 8 on the scale.

Other scales will measure remoteness, ecological integrity, the extent to which the soundscape is natural and the scale of the wild place in its entirety.

As we test these scales on the land in our care, we might decide to measure additional aspects or change the way we measure them. The aim is for the tool to be used by the greatest number of land carers in their day-to-day work.

We will also explore how we can involve the wider public in a large-scale citizen science project. The aim is to equip as many people as possible with the skills and knowledge to accurately capture data that can help landowners map the wild places in their care.

Wherever possible, we want to increase awareness of the importance of wild places across society. As part of that ambition, we plan to incorporate an understanding of wild attributes and use them in our future education and volunteering programmes.

Thinking big

Ali Austin updates us on an exceptionally busy year at Ben Nevis – including the start of an exciting new nature restoration partnership

GIVEN its size, prestige and sheer number of visitors, the Trust's Nevis property has more eyes on it than most. And that focus is about to become greater still with the news that the Trust will soon embark on an exciting new project that will provide the kind of coherence and scale that is needed to bring positive change to the area's landscape and biodiversity.

With the ambition of restoring, expanding and connecting native habitats, the milestone Nevis Nature Network is hosted by the Nevis Landscape Partnership (NLP), with whom the Trust has a long history of working collaboratively to improve habitat and infrastructure throughout the area.

Crucially, the project reaches far beyond the Trust's landholding and includes extensive areas owned by neighbouring landowners – JAHAMA Highland Estates, Glen Nevis Estate and Forestry and Land Scotland (see area map on page 15).

But why undertake such a project now? In recent years, all landowning partners have made efforts to identify important actions for nature restoration on their land. And all have come to the same conclusion: to make a genuinely meaningful difference, it is better to work together, and at scale.

Initial habitat restoration feasibility studies have identified that the biggest ecological issues, such as herbivore management and the spread of non-native invasive species, cannot be tackled in isolation.

SCALING UP

In terms of scale, this is by far the most ambitious nature restoration project yet in the NLP area. While the Trust manages 1,761ha in Glen Nevis and on Ben Nevis itself, the project covers a total of 9,000ha.

Within the project area lies a vast array of native habitats, from ancient riparian woodland along the River Nevis, fragments of Caledonian forest and Scottish rainforest to rare montane scrub, semi-permanent snow beds and upland heath and grassland.

The shared vision is to restore a rich mosaic of woodland habitats across Ben Nevis and Glen Nevis to secure the future of rare and vulnerable local species and to share a love of wild places with people near and far.

To achieve this, there are four priority aims: restoring native woodland; removing invasive non-native species; securing montane scrub; and supporting people's connections with nature.

As part of an initial nine-month development phase,

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALI AUSTIN

Just two years in, the peatland restoration site at Nevis is showing strong signs of recovery; Ali Austin armed with a dragonfly survey net (top left)

the Trust will work with specialists in each priority area to complete four feasibility studies. This phase will help collate existing monitoring and habitat evidence as well as land management information across the whole area, identifying – and filling – gaps in knowledge to build a series of potential actions with clear costs and outcomes that can then be undertaken across this vast landscape.

Later in the year, and as part of this process, the specialists will inform and upskill local people through a series of workshops alongside project partners, land managers and operational staff. This will help all partners decide what to take forward and how to approach collective fundraising for the agreed actions as part of the later delivery phase.

For the Trust and all involved, it is crucial to include not just decision makers in this first phase but also the people who will be on the ground delivering changes in land management across the local area.

MONTANE WILLOW

While the Nevis Nature Network project will shape much of the Trust's work at Nevis going forward, similarly the Trust's work will help inform the project plans.

Montane willow surveys are a good example. This summer, Trust staff headed high into the mountains at a time when the remaining populations were flowering, to establish the reproductive health of each population. While it was already known that the area had significant

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"Over time, this peat will build up, and natural processes will return, with the sphagnum growth enabling the area once again to store rather than release carbon"

populations of downy willow on cliffs and hard-to-reach areas, it was a delight to discover new records of another species, tea-leaved willow, at some isolated sites.

Overall, however, montane willow habitat is in poor condition due to herbivore impacts. The intention now is to identify populations that need urgent attention and those that are suitable for seed or cutting collections. This information will then be fed into an herbivore management plan for the area, which will enable the remnant populations to recover and expand.

Other work also continues. Warm weather has been in short supply this summer, which has stalled efforts to carry out dragonfly surveys at the Trust's peatland restoration site in Glen Nevis. However, when the sun did make an appearance, Trust staff made a quick sprint there to assess what was present.

While there were no sightings of the rare northern emerald dragonflies that were spotted last year, we discovered black darter dragonflies flying over the bog pools created by the dams installed at the end of 2022. It was an encouraging sign as these could have been the nymphs that were identified earlier in the year.

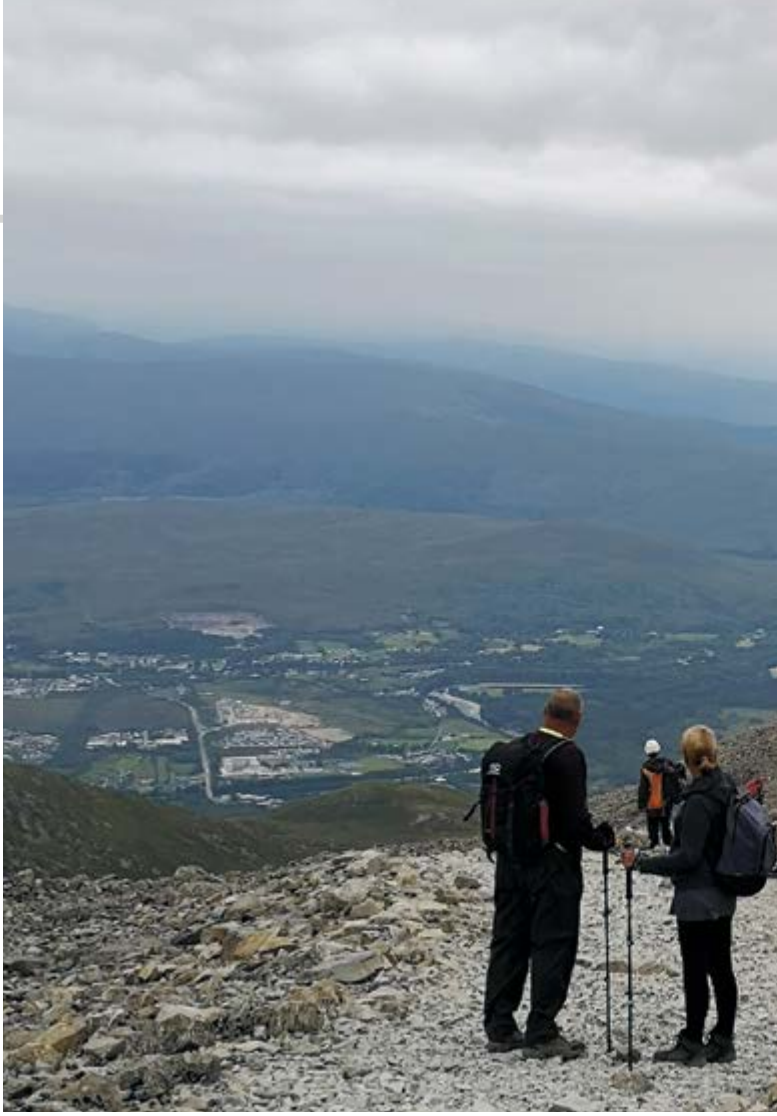
Elsewhere, staff watched with glee as a golden-ringed dragonfly laid its eggs in one of the pools that had been created. Many of these bog pools are already recolonising with sphagnum around the edges – a sign of life returning to expanses of what were once just bare peat. Over time, this peat will build up, and natural processes will return, with the sphagnum growth enabling the area once again to store rather than release carbon.

PATH REPAIRS

In July, the improved weather also enabled the Trust to carry out a long-awaited helicopter lift of 43 tonnes (53 bags!) of stone on to the upper slopes of Ben Nevis for footpath repair work.

This project was delayed from last year, first due to poor weather on potential flight days and then out-of-service helicopters later in the year. Dry conditions meant it was an especially busy day on Ben Nevis, with six marshals plus two ground crew needed to keep all the walkers safe and away from the helicopter flight path and drop zones.

Later in the year, when it is quieter on the hill, the path team will rebuild revetment (edges), where eroded shortcuts are threatening to undermine the path. A huge thank you is due to all those who donated to the Trust's Nevis Path Appeal in 2023 – generous contributions that helped secure funding for repair work on a path used by hundreds of thousands of walkers each year.



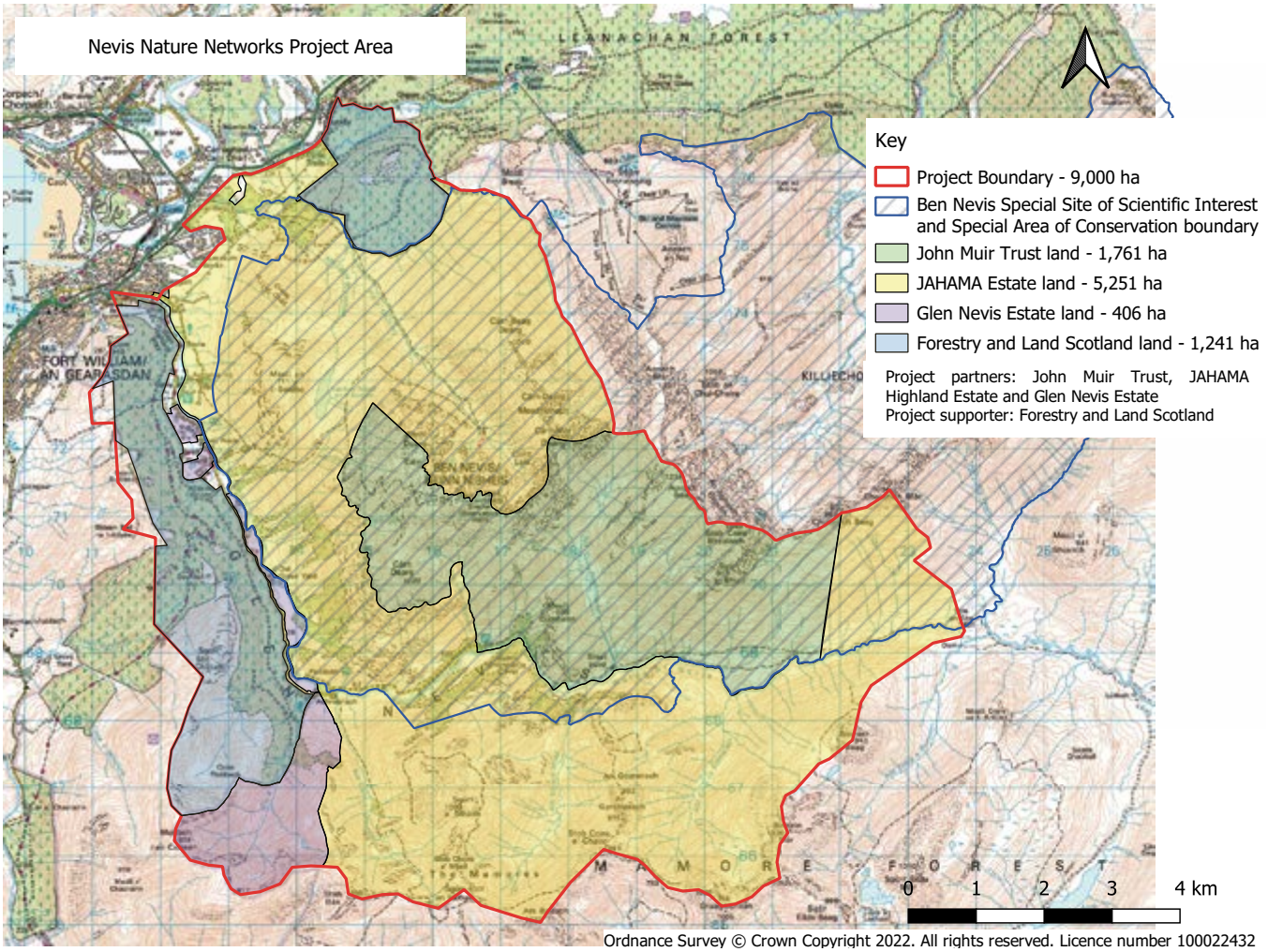
Further information
The development phase of the Nevis Nature Network (see area opposite) is funded by the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund (managed by NatureScot); Rewilding Britain's Rewilding Innovation Fund; The Woodland Trust; Forestry and Land Scotland; JAHAMA Highland Estate; Glen Nevis Estate; and Friends of Nevis. It also sees in-kind support from all partners.

For more information visit, ***tinyurl.com/yc4zw4kv***

About the author
Ali Austin is the Trust's Nevis Property Manager

Hard rock (clockwise from main): heli-lifting bags of stone for path repairs; black darter dragonfly; sphagnum and sundews return to recovering peatland

"We discovered black darter dragonflies flying over the bog pools created by the dams installed at the end of 2022"



PHOTOGRAPH: MARK CARTER

An aerial view of the former Kilmarie fish hatchery at Strathaird

Taking shape

Plans to redevelop the Strathaird site on land we manage on the Isle of Skye are starting to come together. John MacRae reports on the latest progress

WORK has begun on readying non-crofted land at Strathaird for development – an area that includes a disused fish hatchery, a farm, several underutilised buildings and a former church. However, the financial challenges faced by the Trust mean that some elements of the project have been delayed.

We have been working with the community to clear redundant items from the former hatchery and we hope to see many of the materials recycled over the coming months. Meanwhile, at the farm, we have had a temporary office installed while the Trust reviews options for the two dilapidated cottages by the roadside – Clach Glas and Blaven.

Earlier in the year, structural engineers carried out a detailed survey of the old church to facilitate removal of the adjoining agricultural shed. This shed, along with one other and the deer larder, have now been dismantled, sold and removed.

This year we also surveyed the scale of invasive non-native species across Strathaird and engaged a team of local contractors to spend a week tackling fuchsia at Keppoch and rhododendron at Kilmarie Lochan (see page 24 for more on this work).

Looking ahead – and subject to funding – we have identified several priority projects that meet our charitable objectives to restore and protect wild places, while considering the varied opportunities and issues in the local area.

One such project relates to the Kilmarie reservoir and dam where we are investigating the potential and steps involved to lower and/or remove the reservoir spillway. Doing so will reduce the downstream flood risk, enable a greater proportion of the wider site to support development, plus help return the river and reservoir area to a more natural state.

Elsewhere, earlier this summer the Trust brought in a contractor to repair and rebuild the boundary fence between Strathaird freehold land and that of the Elgol, Glasnakille and Drinan common grazings. The first phase of work began in August, and will be followed by the second phase of livestock grid installation in early autumn.

The purpose is to reduce grazing pressure from domestic livestock which will allow, in time, natural regeneration of native woodlands that are presently being suppressed by overgrazing.

Work is also planned to audit the condition of the existing footpath network plus the potential for new paths, illustrating how these will link to the site and wider landscape. It will also consider how local people and visitors use and access these paths and what additional facilities such as car parking and toilet provision might be required.

All of this work offers an exciting future chapter in the history of the Strathaird property.

Further information
For much more on the Trust's work at Strathaird, visit ***johnmuirtrust.org/strathaird***

About the author
John MacRae is the Trust's Skye Manager

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2024-2025 Gift Catalogue

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Wild things collection

Three Tea Towels

Bundle of three cotton tea towels to celebrate our work restoring peatland

TTPP | 3 x Tea Towels | £18

Golden Eagle by Paul Bartlett

A limited edition signed print featuring a golden eagle in flight, from an original mixed media painting created using old editions of our Members' Journal.

GEP | Golden Eagle Print | £80 (unframed)

Mountain coaster

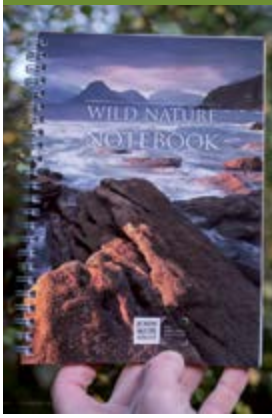
Locally produced, laser engraved, wooden coaster featuring one of the mountains in our care.

MCA | Ben Nevis Coaster

MCB | Blà Bheinn Coaster

MCC | Schiehallion Coaster

£7.50 each



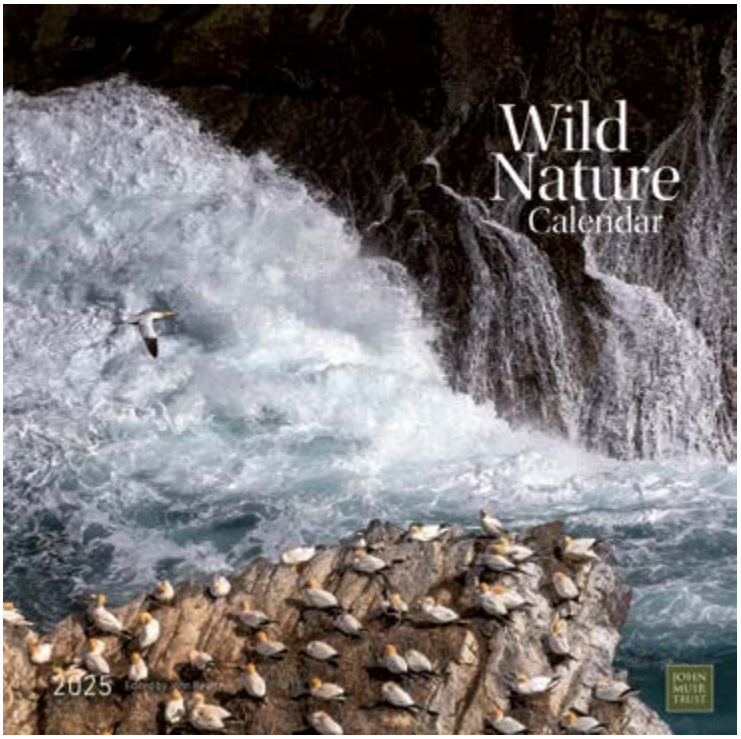
Wild Nature Notebook

Three pages of inspiring wildlife photographs interspersed with plenty of blank pages for your own notes.

NBB | A5 Notebook | £3.50

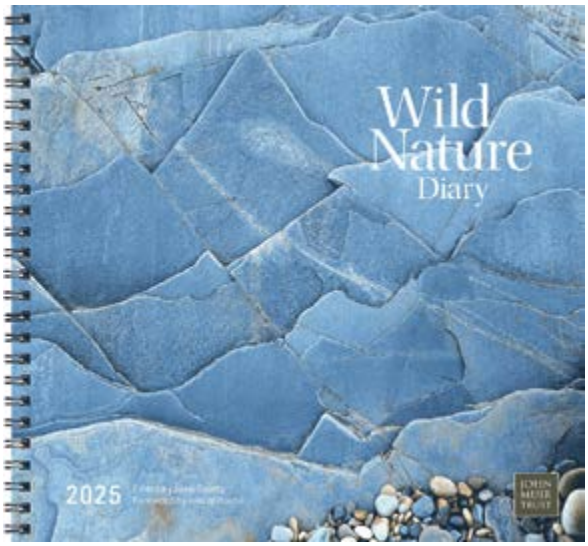
Wild Nature Diary and Calendar 2025

Edited by nature, wildlife and adventure photographer John Beatty



Calendar – 300mm x 300mm

CL1 | Calendar | £13



Diary – One page and photo per week, 205mm x 192mm, spiral bound

DY1 | Diary | £17

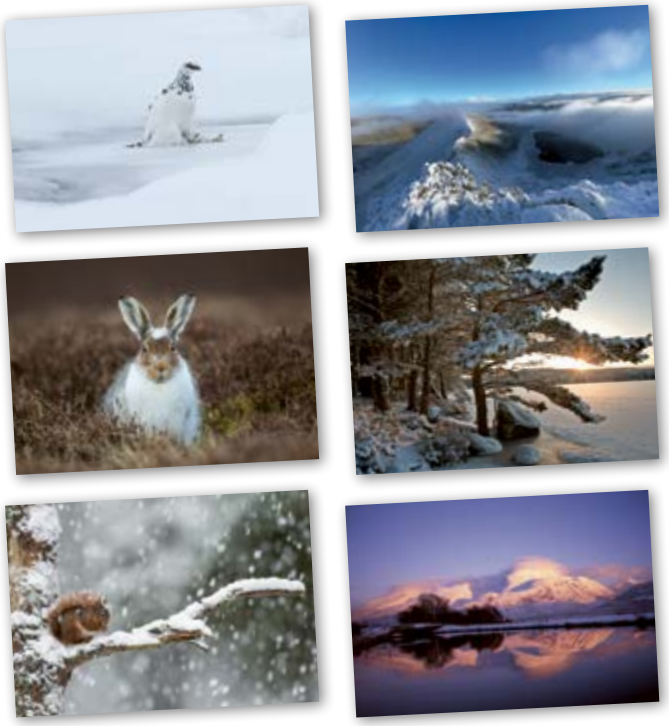
Buy the 2025 Wild Nature Diary and Calendar together for £27 and save £3 on purchasing individually

DC1 | 1 x each of Wild Nature Diary and Calendar 2025 | £27

Christmas Cards – Landscape and Wildlife

Each set of cards contains 12 cards – six inspiring landscape and wildlife photographs (two of each image). Inside message reads: "Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year"

Set A - limited availability



LW1A | 1 x Pack of 12 cards | £7.50

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LW1B | 1 x Pack of 12 cards | £7.50

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Item description	Code	Price each	Quantity	Total
1 pack of Christmas Cards – Set A	LW1A	£7.50		
1 pack of Christmas Cards – Set B	LW1B	£7.50		
3 packs of Christmas Cards	LW3	£19.50	Set A: Set B:	
Three Tea Towels	TTPP	£18		
Mountain Coaster	MC	£7.50	A: B: C:	
Golden Eagle Print	GEP	£80		
Wild Nature Landscape Notebook – A5	NBB	£3.50		
Wild Nature Diary 2025	DY1	£17		
Wild Nature Calendar 2025	CL1	£13		
1 of each of Wild Nature Diary and Calendar 2025	DC1	£27		
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UK postage and packaging				£5
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PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID FLEETWOOD

Glenlude is now home to a mix of habitat that benefits many bird species

Life returns

Isaac Johnston celebrates more than a decade of volunteer-led conservation and breeding bird success at Glenlude in the Scottish Borders

THE Trust took over management of Glenlude 12 years ago, since when Karen Purvis, the Trust's Property Manager at the site, has worked tirelessly with volunteers to restore habitats, monitor species and engage the local community at what is becoming an increasingly special wild place.

As well as undertaking vital habitat creation and restoration work, it is important to monitor how such changes have an impact on the land and the species that are present there. A wide range of monitoring takes place on Trust properties including moth trapping, dwarf shrub heath plots, mountain ringlet butterfly and breeding bird surveys.

Today, Glenlude is a wonderful place to survey birds. Transects snake through a patchwork of varied habitats, ranging from heathland and broadleaved woodland to scrub and marshy grassland.

It is clear that the Trust's conservation interventions have made a difference in the numbers and diversity of species now at the site. In 2014, the Trust recorded 202 birds across 29 different species. Ten years on, overall numbers have more than tripled, with the most recent survey this summer recording 751 individuals across 44 different species.

Whinchat

PHOTOGRAPH: ADOBE STOCK

Of those species, there are a few of particular significance. Tree pipits are on the UK Red List for Birds of Conservation Concern, with a range that has reduced by 29 per cent since the late 1960s, partly due to habitat loss/change.

At Glenlude, clear-felling and leaving standing deadwood have provided new areas for these charismatic little birds to breed – and plenty of 'song posts' from which to sing. With more forest restructuring planned, numbers are anticipated to increase further.

Although not a rare species, the population of willow warblers has also increased dramatically, with 97 individuals recorded in 2024, up from just 27 in 2014. Tree planting alongside effective deer management, has allowed willow and scrub to regenerate across the site – perfect for a bird that, as its name suggests, thrives in such habitat.

Whinchats, which migrate from Africa to breed here in the summer, also feature on the UK Red List and are another species to benefit from habitat improvements, especially to areas of moorland and scrub.

Overall, the future for a whole range of birds at Glenlude is now looking bright. As the Trust continues to remove stands of coniferous woodland and replace them with native woodland, there is an excitement about what new species will arrive next.

Glenlude is an example to follow in large-scale conservation with people at its heart. Such improvements wouldn't have been possible without the help of volunteers, school groups and many others who have delivered so much valuable practical work.

About the author
Isaac Johnston is the Trust's Thirlmere Resilience Project Officer. He has undertaken breeding bird surveys at several Trust sites, including Glenlude

Fighting back

Callum Sinclair from the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative explains why a landscape-scale approach is essential for the control of invasive non-native species

Staff and volunteers tackle (clockwise from main) stands of giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam; American skunk cabbage

PHOTOGRAPHY: SISI

THE Scottish Invasive Species Initiative – the largest invasive non-native species (INNS) control project in the British Isles – works with local communities, landowners and volunteers to tackle problem areas across 43 northern Scotland river catchments. In all, the project covers more than 29,500km^2 – or more than a third of mainland Scotland.

The project is unusual in that it brings together strategic control of both a range of invasive non-native plants and an invasive non-native mammal – the American mink. The initiative was funded for its first five years (2018 to 2023) by NatureScot and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and is now supported (to 2026) by the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund.

But why such a concerted focus on these plants and animals from elsewhere? In short, INNS spell trouble – and expensive trouble at that. Such species negatively impact the natural environments they establish themselves in – often outcompeting native species and destabilising habitats – limit economic or recreational activities and are, more often than not, costly, long-lived problems to remove.

INNS are also likely to present an ongoing and increasing problem for people and native biodiversity alike. Their rate of arrival has increased sharply, especially since the Industrial Revolution and the advent of international travel and trade. In Britain, around 10 to 12 new species arrive every year with, on average, one or two having the potential to become invasive and cause problems.

While INNS are a challenge on these shores, they are also a global problem. The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment of Biodiversity (2019) identified INNS as one of the five biggest drivers of biodiversity loss globally alongside changing use of land and sea, direct exploitation of organisms, climate change and pollution.

Another recent IPBES Assessment on Invasive Alien Species and their control found that INNS have a key role in 60 per cent of global plant and animal extinctions and that annual costs caused by these species now exceed $423bn (£322bn). These costs have quadrupled every decade since 1970. Within this context, it is no surprise to see the threats posed by INNS recognised within the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045.

PARTNERSHIP WORK

The Scottish Invasive Species Initiative is, by necessity, a partnership. To operate across such a vast and complex area requires effective oversight and leadership (provided by NatureScot), committed local organisations (10 river and fishery trusts and boards operating from Tayside to west Sutherland) and a trusted academic partner (University of Aberdeen).

This structure, combined with a committed project team, a network of passionate volunteers and an increasing number of collaborating land managers and landowners, has allowed us to gain traction on this challenging problem.

To make meaningful progress requires prioritisation and a systematic approach. There are many invasive non-native species to choose from and so the project has selected a suite of plants – giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and American skunk cabbage – plus the American mink, upon which to focus its efforts. All are tricky customers and are recognised as among the most impactful, damaging and problematic invasive species on our shores.

Giant hogweed is a spectacular plant that often reaches heights of more than 3m, is able to self-fertilise and produces up to 50,000 seeds per plant which can survive for up to a decade in the soil before germination and growth. The plant also possesses a photo-toxic sap that can cause skin burns that recur on exposure to sunlight.

Known for its delicate pink/white flowers, Himalayan balsam grows in dense stands, with seeds that are distributed over many metres using jet propulsion from its exploding seedpods. Japanese knotweed is another plant that grows in dense, impenetrable stands. It has bamboo-like stems and expands via root-like rhizomes

"All are incredibly effective colonisers and are often widespread and well established in river catchments – with the flow of water helping to disperse seeds over wide areas"

which can spread widely underground and even grow from small fragments if broken.

Meanwhile, American skunk cabbage, with its distinctive large, leathery leaves, produces seeds from a central yellow spike that can be viable for eight years in the soil. Like other invasives, it also spreads via rhizomes.

All are incredibly effective colonisers and are often widespread and well established in river catchments – with the flow of water helping to disperse seeds over wide areas.

Dealing with these plants is far from straightforward. As such, the project has adopted a multi-faceted approach to control as it works towards eradication. Firstly, work is systematic and orderly: it starts at the top of infestations by river catchment and works downstream.

This can mean lower catchments are not tackled until upper areas are under management. We recognise that removal will take many years – perhaps a decade for giant hogweed sites due to the seed bank in each location – and so project teams return year on year to complete control.

We record control efforts and monitor plant abundance each year. Where plants are not (and in reality cannot be) eradicated quickly, we can demonstrate the reduced time and chemical volume used to complete control each year and the reduced abundance of the target plant.

This approach helps to demonstrate improvement and progress and frees time for us to move to downstream infestations. We also recruit hundreds of volunteers to work alongside us – many of whom have gained formal qualifications – as well as working closely with land managers to provide training, materials and equipment. The aim is to equip them to help themselves on their land where the problem was too large, too expensive or too technically challenging to tackle alone.

ENCOURAGING PROGRESS

Our approach is working. In all, volunteers and landowners have contributed more than 23,700 hours to plant control since 2018 – the equivalent of more than 16 full-time staff working for a year – in addition to our own direct staff time.

This combination of effort helps us to work at the necessary scale. In 2023, the team brought some 982km of riverbank under management for giant hogweed and we have also seen the problem shrink at other control sites.

In the years ahead, we expect to see increasing numbers of sites where target plants are eradicated, where ongoing control is at less intensive 'care and maintenance' levels and undertaken by land managers or volunteers – often independent of the project itself.

→ continued

A volunteer group removing Himalayan balsam

We also anticipate progressing to the point where entire catchments are brought under management with control leading towards eradication and low-level monitoring and management in each river.

LESSONS LEARNED

Many lessons have already been learned, chief among them that control at this scale requires persistence, a systematic approach and coordination. It can also mean ignoring big and messy problems (often in lower rivers) until upper infestations have been tackled.

The power of partnership, collaboration and people is also vital. Harnessing volunteers and community effort as well as removing land manager barriers and reticence to tackle the problem are all paying dividends.

Such concerted, collective effort can also persuade others to engage and reduce the number of locations not engaged. There is no legal requirement for landowners to remove INNS (only a requirement to prevent spread elsewhere) so stimulating voluntary effort is essential.

We have also learned to keep good records and monitor to demonstrate progress. Showing that progress on a site-by-site basis is not only essential but also persuasive in winning hearts and minds to do more and invest in genuinely dealing with these problems in the longer term. Three-year periods of funding support will not solve invasive plant problems anywhere.

Crucially, we believe fundamentally that the battle against INNS can be won and that the approaches we have adopted can be used elsewhere. By actively engaging communities with local freshwater environments, we protect and restore Scotland's waterways, landscapes and biodiversity for us all. We believe this is vitally important work.

Further information

For more on the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative, and to get involved, visit ***invasivespecies.scot***

About the author

Callum Sinclair is Project Manager for the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative, employed by NatureScot

Big Skye thinking

When the Trust brought in a woodland consultant this year to survey the extent of invasive non-native plant species at Strathaird on the Isle of Skye, some of the results were surprising.

"We'd always thought it was *rhododendron ponticum* and fuchsia that posed the biggest challenge, but not so," explains John MacRae, the Trust's Skye Manager. "Instead, the survey identified that our biggest problem is the abundance of a plant called *pernettya mucronata* (prickly heath, pictured) which spreads rapidly and can quickly swamp other ground plants and colonise woodland."

A flowering shrub native to South America, and often introduced to areas as a garden or park plant, prickly heath thrives in the same acidic soils as heathers and can be incredibly difficult to remove. One method involves cutting and then spraying it with a chemical weedkiller – far from ideal when close to watercourses or trying to protect native ecology.

PHOTOGRAPH: PLANTSAM.COM

Earlier this year, the Trust also brought in local contractors to tackle stands of rhododendron and fuchsia. The latter has proved especially adept at colonising areas of clear fell sites where the Trust is looking to replace areas of former conifer plantations with native, broadleaved woodland.

Although attractive to look at when in flower, it is now widely recognised that these vigorous non-native plants shade out native species and, if left unchecked, can prevent the establishment of native woodland.

Whatever the plant species, be it prickly heath, rhododendron or fuchsia, all require a significant amount of attention and investment over a lengthy period of time if they are to be controlled in a meaningful way.

As such, the Trust is now studying the woodland consultant's report to determine how best to progress the actions recommended within it and the financial costs of doing so – potentially with other landowning partners and agencies to adopt more of a landscape-scale approach.

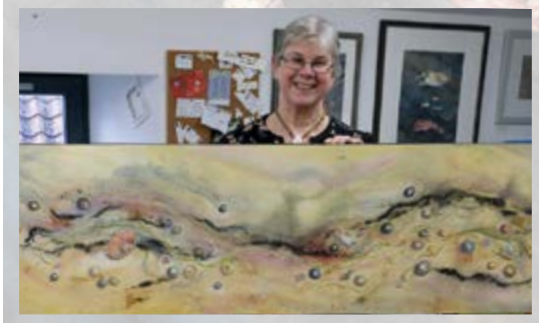
Seeking Treasure

An exhibition of paintings by Liz Harvey, inspired by shells, leaves and natural forms discovered on Scottish coasts and in local woods.

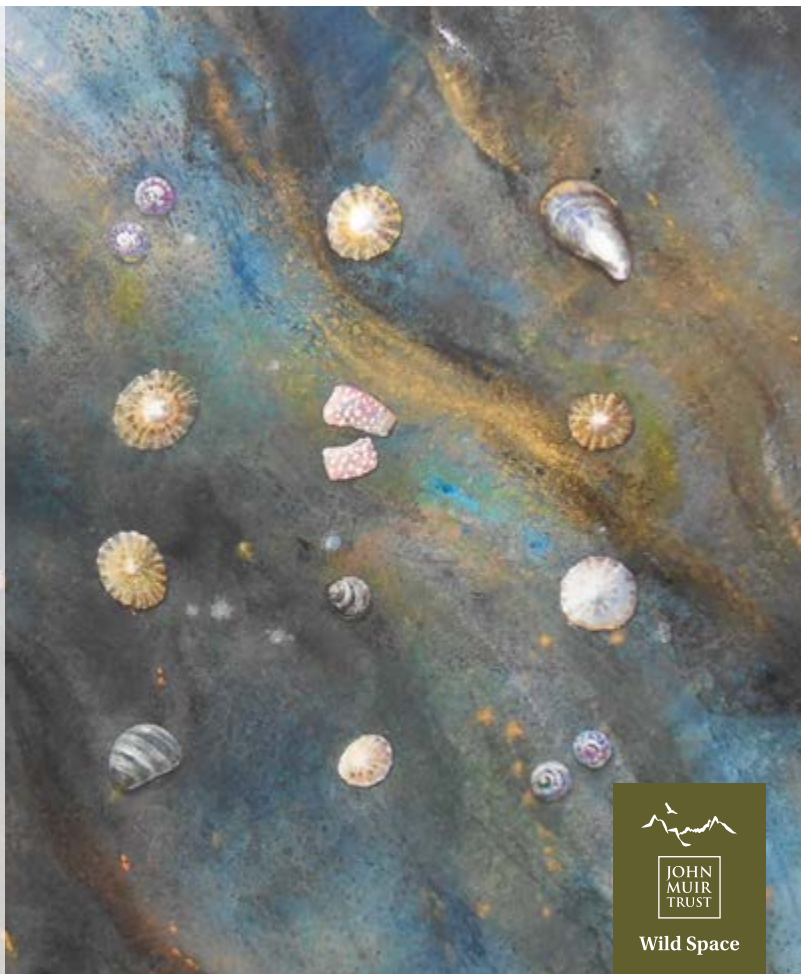
2 October to 31 October 2024.
In our Wild Space gallery in Pitlochry.

I paint in watercolour and mixed media, often incorporating materials such as sand, pine needles, or imprints of seashells into my paintings. The exhibition will consist of a series of paintings, some framed, others mounted on board, also smaller, mounted paintings and cards.

Liz Harvey



The Alan Reece Gallery, Wild Space, Tower House, Station Road, Pitlochry PH16 5AN



Working together

John Gorst from United Utilities explains why the water company is working in partnership with the Trust in the Lake District

Thirlmere Resilience Project tree nursery

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

UNITED Utilities knows all about scale. We provide water and wastewater services for 7.5 million people in north west England – an area that stretches from Cheshire and the Welsh border in the south to the Scottish border in the north.

In all, across the region, United Utilities owns around 57,000 ha of predominately upland catchment land. How that land is managed matters greatly to us.

The Thirlmere estate sits in the centre of the Lake District National Park, with the Helvellyn massif on the eastern side of Thirlmere reservoir and the high Raise mountains to the west.

Created 140 years ago by the Manchester Corporation, the Thirlmere reservoir dam raised the levels of the two existing lakes in order to provide clean potable water for the people of Manchester and north west England.

Since its creation, Thirlmere has been providing 250 million litres of drinking water every day. The recent development of a new pipeline scheme means that it now also supplies water to the communities of West Cumbria.

STORM DESMOND

This is an area that was challenged like never before in December 2015 when Cumbria was hit by one of the largest rainfall events the country has ever seen. Storm Desmond delivered 405mm of rain in a 35-hour storm, with much of that rainfall falling in Thirlmere and the surrounding valleys.

The damage caused was off the scale, with the main trunk road through the central Lakes covered with landslides and a large section washed away altogether. The storm also resulted in serious impacts on the raw water quality in Thirlmere reservoir.

It was by no means a one-off; over the past two decades, the estate has been impacted by several large storms, although we have also seen an increase in the frequency of dry weather events and droughts. All lead to major challenges around water quality and water resources.

JOINING FORCES

Beginning in 2020, our work with the John Muir Trust, as partners on the Thirlmere Resilience Project, is another example of a collaborative approach that has seen us work on catchment restoration projects with others for almost 20 years. Elsewhere in the Lakes, we also work closely with the National Trust, Forestry England and Natural England at Wild Ennerdale, as well as with the RSPB at Wild Haweswater.

Over that time, we have learnt that partnerships can deliver far more than we could achieve alone. Not only is it a more cost-effective way of working but also allows us to benefit from all the expertise that external organisations bring.

The reality is that what's good for nature is also good for water. By slowing its flow through having intact vegetation, re-connecting rivers to their floodplains and re-wetting peat soils, we can reduce the severity of flooding and drought. Such actions also improve raw water quality by reducing the levels of turbidity (suspended solids) and DOC (dissolved organic carbon), both of which need to be removed from the water before it goes into supply.

Our association with the John Muir Trust actually dates back to its management of Glenridding Common on the eastern side of Helvellyn. As managers of the neighbouring land, we were in regular contact with Trust staff Pete Barron and Isaac Johnston and I had the privilege of joining both to help plant willows on the summit crags.

PHOTOGRAPH: UNITED UTILITIES

John Gorst above Thirlmere

"Our association with the John Muir Trust dates back to its management of Glenridding Common on the eastern side of Helvellyn"

NATURAL FIT

The success of the Glenridding work, both in terms of ecological restoration and community outreach, meant that it was natural to approach the Trust as we looked to build a partnership to deliver our catchment restoration project at Thirlmere.

The Thirlmere Resilience Project has since developed into a wide-ranging partnership that also includes Natural England, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, West Cumbria Rivers Trust and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Lancaster University.

Together, we are implementing a series of 'interventions', from peatland restoration and developing native woodland to botanical and wider river restoration. Crucially, we have also increased deer management alongside major changes to the grazing regime – initially reducing the sheep flock by 80 per cent and then looking at the use of cattle as part of the grazing plan.

Our overall ambition is to restore the hydrological integrity of the estate which, in turn, will give us the best chance of mitigating the impacts of climate change and improve biodiversity and bio-abundance on the estate.

We look forward to developing the project further with exciting projects such as establishing a new tree nursery (see box below), delivering habitat and species monitoring and continuing to develop volunteering and training opportunities.

Looking ahead, we will also be working closely with existing landscape-scale restoration projects and the newly formed Landscape Recovery Project across the National Park, reinforcing the work at Thirlmere as an example of how partnerships can deliver ecological recovery at scale.

About the author
John Gorst is Catchment Partnership Officer at United Utilities

Growing on

Together with a team of enthusiastic volunteers, Isaac Johnston, the Trust's Thirlmere Resilience Project Officer, has created a tree nursery at the southern end of Thirlmere reservoir that will produce locally propagated trees and flowers for planting out and creating new areas of montane scrub to replace coniferous plantation.

Maintained by a group of volunteers, the nursery has enough capacity to grow around 400 tree seedlings at any one time.

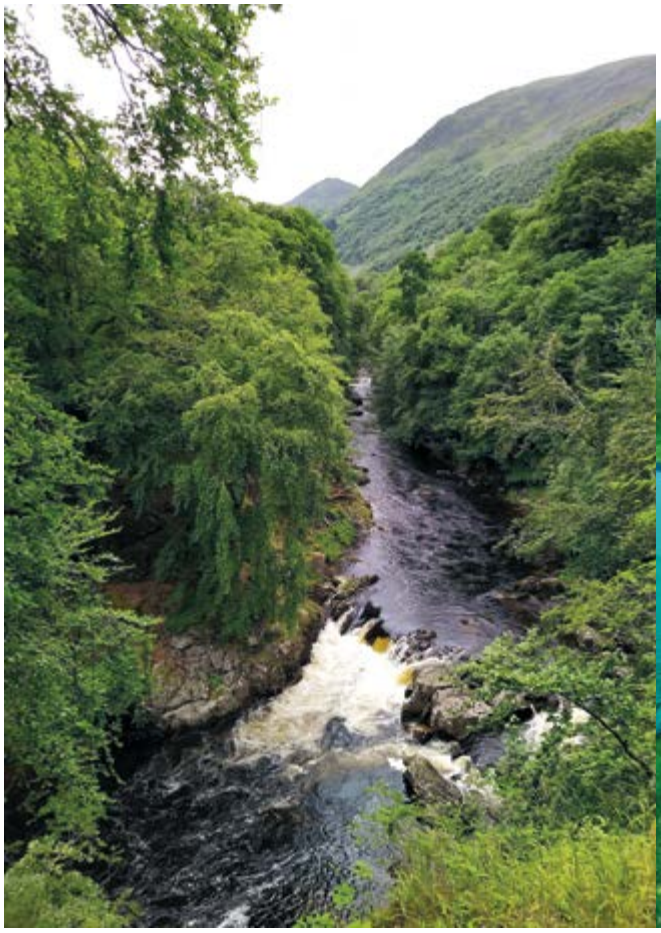
The Trust is now working with the local community, including schools, to collect seeds and grow plants in the nursery.

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

Already, the nursery is stocked full of seedlings (pictured) from a range of native trees and shrubs, including aspen, elm, oak, Scots pine, dwarf and downy birches, juniper and locally rare montane willows.

And when the time comes, the same volunteers will help staff to plant out the saplings on the Thirlmere estate, so contributing to the resilience of the landscape.

A similar array of flowers are also being propagated, from cranesbills and campions to water avens, alpine cinquefoil and burnet-saxifrage.



PHOTOGRAPHS: DREW McNAUGHTON

Retracing steps

Julie Gough highlights the ancestral connections made by Drew McNaughton – one of the latest Trust supporters to undertake his own personal Journey for Wildness

IT ALL began almost 20 years ago. In May 2006, the John Muir Trust's original Journey for the Wild saw participants cross land, sea, rivers and lochs in a 4,000-km pilgrimage to Ben Nevis – the celebrated mountain and estate taken into the Trust's care just six years previously.

In all, more than 1,500 staff, members and volunteers from all backgrounds took it in turns to carry specially carved wooden message batons across some of the wildest parts of the UK. Their mission: to help raise awareness of the importance of wild places and the work of the Trust in protecting them.

The adventures began with the batons taken to the furthest flung cardinal points in the UK: the Isles of Scilly, Shetland, St. Kilda and far out in the North Sea. From each location, participants began their journeys using only non-motorised transport – on foot, by boat, kayak and bike – with the final 'journeyers' converging at the base of Ben Nevis itself.

On 21 June 2021, to celebrate 21 years of caring for Nevis, the Trust launched a new Journey for Wildness appeal – a renewed call to take action for wild places that invited all to embark on their own journeys and help raise funds for the Trust's work.

Since then, many intrepid Trust supporters have taken up the baton, including 10-year-olds Magnus and Joe, who tackled the 66-mile Bob Graham Round in the Lake District in just seven days, and 80-year-old Delia Kennedy who completed a 160-km walk around her local area in Devon.

TIME TRAVEL

One of our most recent journeyers is 50-year-old Drew McNaughton, a ranger and John Muir Award leader who undertook a three-week trek across Scotland this summer, starting at Kenmore by Loch Tay and passing through Glen Lyon, the Great Glen and Glen Gary before finishing in Knoydart.

As well as reinforcing just how important wild places are to him, the journey had a personal element. Although he grew up initially in the US, Drew's family has ties with the Glen Lyon area in Perthshire. It is from there that his ancestors moved to Lochaber before emigrating to Canada in 1821, departing from Loch Hourn on the Knoydart peninsula.

Drew himself moved in the other direction, coming to the UK aged seven. As he grew up, he lived and then worked in some of Scotland's most spectacular wild

Walking wild (clockwise from left): entering Glen Lyon; camping with company; first sight of Ben Nevis; view to Barrisdale Bay, Knoydart; Drew at Wild Space, Pitlochry

"I'm really glad I could do something for the John Muir Trust who work to preserve such beautiful places"

places. His work life even included time spent as a ranger for the Knoydart Foundation, although he was unaware of his family's connection with Loch Hourn at the time.

Having researched his journey carefully, Drew's route saw him follow some of the old drove roads that his ancestors would have taken as they prepared to emigrate. En route, he passed a dwelling where his ancestors once lived in Glengarry; it was, he says "a huge moment", acting as both a checkpoint and a reminder of the motivations behind his journey.

Although he did not uncover any new information about his ancestors, Drew was able to experience the challenging landscape in which they lived, quite literally travelling in their footsteps through the wild places that had provided them with food and shelter. "It gave me an appreciation of just how tough their lives must have been," he reflects.

EMPTY LANDS

Drew had not expected the final stretch of his journey to be highly populated and he was proved right: the section from Invergarry to Kinloch Hourn and beyond was almost deserted of settlements and other walkers.

As he crossed from Loch Quoich to Kinloch Hourn towards the end of his journey, he was vividly aware of the daunting mountain landscape all around. "It struck awe into my heart but thankfully the rain started and the mountains were covered in clouds so they became less intimidating!" he says.

Drew completed his journey on Trust land at Li and Coire Dhorrcail in Knoydart – a site that was a little off the beaten track and which took a few hours to reach from Barrisdale. On his last day, as he began his climb up Mam Barrisdale to reach Loch an Dubh Lochain, he was met by Calum Wilson, a local man who transported him on the back of a quad bike to his final campsite.

Overall, it was a journey that will live long in the memory. "What an adventure! I made a lot of great connections with people on the way and even when on my own I felt like my ancestors were with me," reflects Drew. "I'm really glad I could do something for the John Muir Trust who work to preserve such beautiful places."

Further information

Read more about Drew's trek and donate to his JustGiving page from our website. And for more information on taking your own Journey for Wildness, visit ***johnmuirtrust.org/journeyforwildness***

About the author

Julie Gough is the Trust's Communications Editor

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK HAMBLIN/2020 VISION

Chasing shadows

Although still critically endangered in Wales and England, pine marten numbers continue to recover in Scotland, writes Rich Rowe

MOSTLY active between dusk and dawn, pine martens rarely reveal themselves easily. But while notoriously difficult to spot, this is an animal that, in Scotland at least, continues to recover lost ground following past human persecution and habitat loss.

Legally protected since the late 1980s, this elusive, cat-sized predator is a creature of the trees. The expansion of commercial forestry plantations and, more recently, regeneration of native woodlands have provided them with the woodland cover they crave.

Chestnut-brown in colour, with a distinctive creamy 'bib' on their throat and upper chest, pine martens are members of the mustelid family of animals, which also includes stoats, weasels and badgers.

Much like their cousins, pine martens enjoy an eclectic diet, feasting in the summer on a diet of birds' eggs, insects, frogs and, especially, blaeberries. In a good berry season, blaeberries can account for a third of the pine marten's diet, with the animal's presence often revealed by the purple-coloured scat left on rocks, logs and other prominent places.

Pine martens mostly rest up during daytime hours in dens made in tree hollows, disused squirrel dreys and rocky crevices, but they become more active during the short daylight hours of winter when there is a greater need to collect and store food. At this time of year, their attention turns to small birds, mice and voles, with foraging trips often taking them many miles from den sites.

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

Alert and agile, pine martens are formidable hunters. Martens are the only members of the mustelid family to have semi-retractable claws – a physiological gift that ensures they are equally speedy whether on the ground or darting through the trees.

Pine martens are even nimble enough to prey on grey squirrels, with evidence to suggest that their presence reduces the numbers of invasive non-native greys to the benefit of native reds.

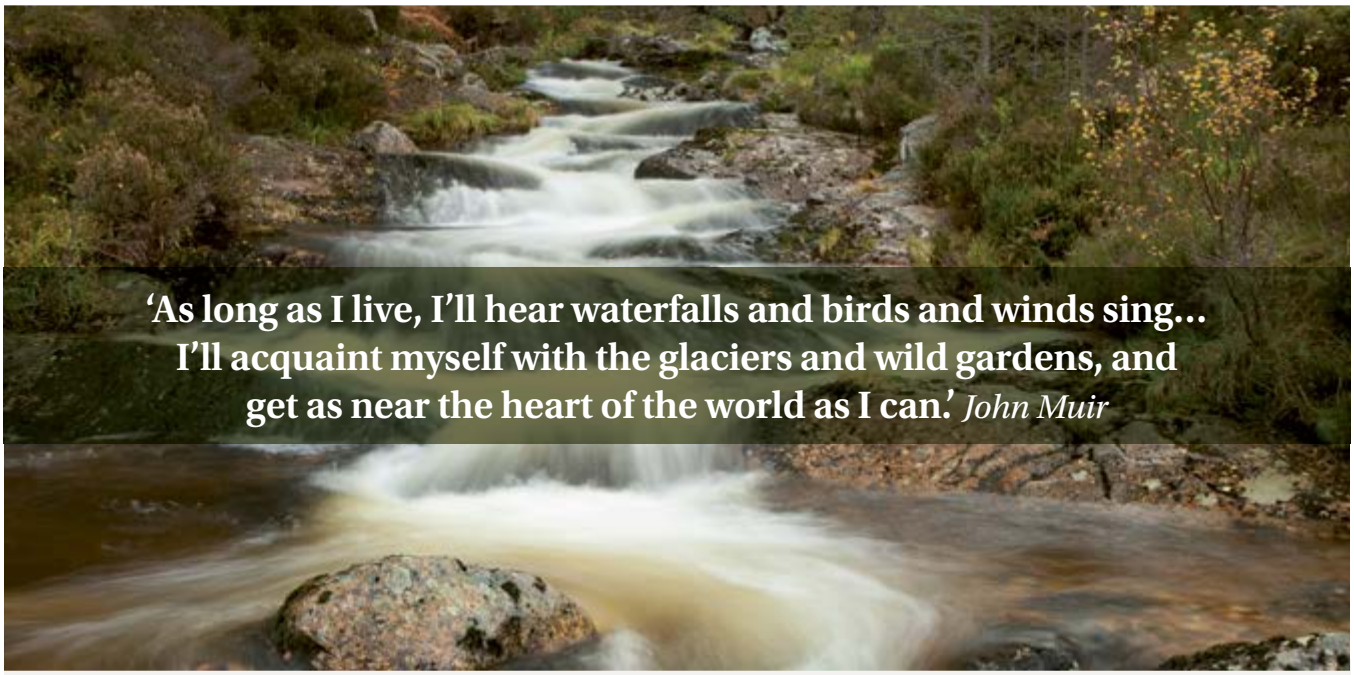
That said, red squirrels cannot rest easy when sharing territory with pine martens. Although they are not thought to take significant numbers, pine martens are one of the few predators able to catch reds, which they chase at high speed through the treetops using their claws and long tails for grip and balance.

Further information

Pine martens are present at Glenlude in the Scottish Borders where trail cameras have revealed their liking for denning in the on-site log store (left).

About the author

Rich Rowe is contributing editor for the Journal



'As long as I live, I'll hear waterfalls and birds and winds sing... I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can.' *John Muir*

Reconnection – Fixing our Broken Relationship with Nature by Miles Richardson

Mhairi Stewart enjoys the sense of hope in a book that tackles thought-provoking questions about our relationship with nature

THROUGH my time working with the Trust, I kept an eye on the ideas around nature connectedness and readily awaited the release of *Reconnection – Fixing our Broken Relationship with Nature*, written by Miles Richardson, a top name in the field and founder of the Nature Connectedness Research Group at the University of Derby.

Nature connectedness, in a nutshell, is the human relationship with the rest of nature. It has been identified as a pre-requisite for pro-environmental and pro-nature conservation behaviours. Whether you believe this relationship is broken and or that we are far closer than we even realise, *Reconnection* is an interesting read.

I've had many discussions with colleagues about our own personal journeys to develop nature connectedness. Similarly, the author begins by exploring his own ups and down in his relationship and where he thinks there was a turning point.

He then explores this on a much larger scale, laying down why he believes our current relationship with nature is broken and takes a look back though history to explore if, how and when this changed. He examines the different relationships between nature, culture and philosophy, studies the changes in language over time as they appear in pop music and film and how common everyday things we value, like pets, can have an unintended impact on nature and our relationship with it.

But this isn't just another book of doom and gloom – it takes a hopeful look at our relationship with nature and the many wonderful ways in which we relate to and benefit from it. He takes a deep dive into how we can develop and enhance nature connectedness and how this relationship helps our wellbeing and brings about environmental benefits.

Refreshingly it is a book that steps into the realms of possible solutions to rebuild this relationship, with a look at the tools for change, how we bring connection into policy and offers an inspiring look towards the future of creating a nature-connected society.

It is a book awash with references to studies and papers with a lot of research tightly packed into a consumable length. The result is a thought-provoking read with a depth and warmth that comes from the author's passion and personal investment in the topic.

If you want to re-examine your own relationship with nature or ponder the powerful impact it has on the health of our planet, this is a great read.

£20.00
pelagicpublishing.com

About the reviewer
Mhairi Stewart is the Trust's former Policy Strategy Lead

Others we like

***Rewild - Can Nature Heal Our World*, Ben Martynoga**
Nature is determined – so starts the latest title in the Explodapedia series of children's science books from biologist and writer, Ben Martynoga. A celebration of the vital role that nature plays in all of our lives – with wonderful illustrations by Moose Allain – *Rewild* is a fun and eye-opening guide to understanding that humans are as part of the natural world as any other animal. It's likely that many adults will learn a great deal from it, too.
£7.99. davidficklingbooks.com

***Wild places, Wild Encounters*, Glen Cousquer**
Another book that explores nature connectedness in all its forms, but with a specific focus on wanderings through Edinburgh – Scotland's great, green capital city – and the

Ethel, by Helen Mort

Rich Rowe dips into the world of a quiet countryside revolutionary who achieved so much for her beloved Peak District and much more besides

APPROPRIATELY, given that the subject of this biography was a woman of many letters, Helen Mort's account of the life of Ethel Haythornthwaite begins with exactly that: a letter from biographer to subject that sets the tone for a 'conversation' that continues throughout.

Penned from one lover of Sheffield to another, the further letters that open each chapter become more familiar and personal as Mort steps ever closer to a woman she admires so much.

But this biography is as much an account of the Peak District and its importance to others as it is about Ethel herself. Like Mort, Ethel sees no such thing quite so binary as urban and rural – instead, the city and nearby moors "bleed into one another, mixed watercolours".

But who was Ethel? It seems that relatively few people are aware of her, even in the city that she called home. For Mort, that only adds to her fascination – a woman who was "difficult to categorise, difficult to capture" and even more compelling for it.

Ethel was born in Sheffield in 1894 to parents made wealthy by industry. She married in 1916 and was widowed a year later, aged 22 – her husband a casualty of the Great War. In 1937, she remarried and with her second husband, Gerald Haythornthwaite, continued what had become tireless work to conserve green spaces in and around the city.

Ethel died in 1986, aged 92, leaving a remarkable legacy. She founded the Sheffield branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England; her advocacy saved large parts of the Peak District from development and helped draw up the Sheffield green belt; and she established the Peak District as the UK's first national park.

But as well as facts, there are also, as Mort reflects, the even more interesting snippets that shape the sense of a life. Ethel was frugal despite being born into wealth; she was a prodigious – and excellent – poet; she disliked housework and rarely put on lights; she shunned direct action in favour of quiet influence; her second husband was nearly 20 years younger than her. And she bought land herself when she had to and donated it back to the public.

The fact that she was no working-class trailblazer, muses Mort, is perhaps why she is not "the stuff of ballads and poetry" and why her name is so rarely mentioned "even in the city that owes so much to her".

But this wonderful book, it is hoped, will raise the profile of a figure whose efforts touched many and who was the subject of countless condolence letters on her death. One simply lamented "why don't we have more people like Ethel to bring order, beauty and love to life?"

£14.95
adventurebooks.com

About the reviewer
Rich Rowe is contributing editor for the Journal

Both main reviewed books are available from our online shop. Visit **johnmuirtrust.org/onlineshop**

nature hotspots of the nearby Lothians. The message is clear: nature is most definitely all around and there is much to be gained from immersing ourselves within it. **£18.99. whittlespublishing.com**

***Running through the Dark*, Jen Scotney**
A successful human rights lawyer and running coach, Jen Scotney was a rising star of the UK ultrarunning scene, with podium places in prestigious races and an eye on the Fastest Known Time for the Pennine Way – her experience of which runs like a thread through the book. But there was a side that she kept hidden. This courageous memoir is also about: grief, childlessness, career burnout, a chronic health condition, resilience, the power of exercise and how sometimes in life expectations must be reset. **£14.95. adventurebooks.com**

Lisa Hooper

With Galloway the potential site of Scotland's third national park, Julie Gough speaks with Lisa Hooper, a Trustee of the Galloway National Park Association and Member of the Society of Wildlife Artists

PHOTOGRAPH: LISA HOOPER

How did you become involved with the Galloway National Park Association (GNPA)?

I was approached by one of our founder members who knew my background (I had worked for the Countryside Commission, now part of Natural England, which still plays a pivotal role in designating English national parks). As a self-employed artist and lifelong naturalist living in the west of the region since 2006, I guess I had a unique skill set.

What convinces you that a national park can deliver economic and social benefits to Galloway?

The proposed national park area (which includes parts of Ayrshire) is characterised by an ageing population, low wages, out-migration of young people and over-dependence on primary industries. We know that national parks deliver lasting and substantial economic benefits by attracting long-term public and private investment. We estimate that the national park could lead to the creation of 2,000 full-time jobs and bring over £200m per annum to the area.

Why is national park status significant?

National parks are not all the same and Scotland's parks have a slightly different remit. But the family of UK parks delivers some common benefits, from better protection of landscapes and increased prosperity to greater opportunities for recreation and more local decision making. Some would say the 'brand' is a slightly tarnished one, and yet national parks remain internationally recognised and powerful tools for delivering long-term benefits across large, otherwise fragmented areas. We should remind ourselves not only of the benefits of designation but also that the status quo in places like Galloway is no longer an option. Change is upon us, much of it detrimental; this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape the future.

How does your work as a wildlife artist help you value wild places more?

I think my interest in natural history and my early career in landscape conservation were stronger influences and it's those that underpin my artistic output. My work is, though, definitely fed by my emotional response to wildlife; both the joy of nature's resilience and the terrible sadness of the losses which I have witnessed in my own lifetime.

Finally, what inspires you both as an artist and as a GNPA Trustee?

As an artist I'm inspired by Scotland's scenery and incredible wildlife. There is much to treasure in Galloway with its varied and complex landscapes and habitats and its beautiful coastline. Above all though, it's the ordinary, untouched pockets of meadow, mire, scrub and shore that are home to the creatures I love. What motivates me as a Trustee is the hope for a more confident, prosperous and resilient future for Galloway, its young people, its landscapes and its biodiversity. I'm touched by the youngsters who are unable to stay here to live and work and by the people in this thinly populated rural region who give up their time to try to deliver the best for their under-resourced communities. There has to be a better future.

Further information

In February, the GNPA submitted a joint national park bid alongside the Galloway and South Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere. NatureScot is now leading a full consultation which will conclude in early 2025. See ***gallowaynationalpark.org***
For more on Lisa's work as a wildlife artist, visit ***hoopoeprints.co.uk***

About the interviewer

Julie Gough is the Trust's Communications Editor

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