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63 AUTUMN 2017

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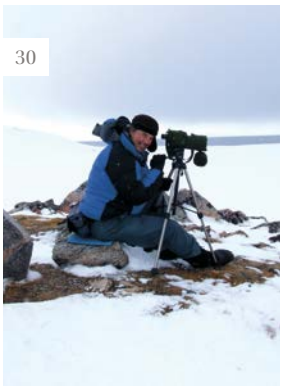

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PHOTOGRAPHS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MARK HAMBLIN; DAVID BELLAMY; CHRIS PUDDEPHAT

COVER: JOHN MUIR AWARD PROVIDERS GATHERING IN GLASGOW'S BOTANIC GARDENS, PHOTOGRAPH: KATRINA MARTIN

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FEATURES

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From the Chief Executive

WELCOME to the autumn edition of the *Journal*. I'll start by saying what a privilege it is to be working with the John Muir Trust, an organisation I have long admired. I was delighted to be offered this role and relish the challenges that lie ahead.

The diverse range of articles in this issue of the *Journal* underlines the fact that our work is not just about a few special places or key species. It is about the way we connect with the world around us. In our frenzied, hi-tech, 24-hour society, we need wild nature more than ever.

Even people who rarely, if ever, get the chance to visit wild places want to know that sanctuaries of solitude – places with the power to stir our souls – will always exist.

That need is reflected in the overwhelming support that people express for the protection of wild land. As we report in the news pages, this summer we commissioned a Scotland-wide YouGov Poll which showed 80 per cent of people support continued protection of Scotland's Wild Land Areas with just five per cent opposed. And while 55 per cent 'strongly agree' with wild land protection, the proportion who 'strongly disagree' registered zero per cent.

I'm sure these same people also support cleaner energy and a low carbon future. I believe the message we need to convey strongly is that with sensible planning, we can deliver our ambitious carbon reduction targets while at the same time protecting our finest landscapes and providing nature with the space to flourish.

Campaigning for wild places inevitably brings us into the political sphere. Over the summer months we have had a number of formal and informal meetings with MSPs and MPs from across the political spectrum. This isn't just lobbying, it is about offering advice and information as requested, and ensuring decision makers are well informed.

Amid all this political and campaigning activity, we still have our muddy boots planted firmly on the ground. As we report on pages 6 and 7, we have made fantastic progress with path restoration work on Skye and in Assynt, while equipping young people with essential pathwork skills and training.

And we are also able to report that, following much hard work by our Schiehallion property manager Liz Auty, the Heart of Scotland Forest Partnership has been officially launched. We are now working with neighbouring landowners from the charity, public and private sectors to expand and join up existing woodlands across a large area in the geographical centre of Scotland.

Meanwhile, we continue to make progress towards taking on a three-year lease of Glenridding Common, with just a few legal details to be ironed out before we make an official announcement. This, we hope, will develop into a long-term involvement in a dramatic part of the Lake District that includes the famed Helvellyn mountain.

If there is one theme that runs through the stories in this issue of the *Journal*, and the other work I have been involved in recently, it is that the future of wild places depends on people. Over the last 20 years, the Trust has been working with hundreds of thousands of people of all ages through the John Muir Award to encourage and reinforce our connection with wild nature.

I'm a firm believer in making sure that everyone has the opportunity to experience nature – and not just for the sake of their own health and well-being. If people can delight in the wonders of nature then it follows that they will do more to ensure that it is conserved, by reducing their own carbon footprint and helping ensure that wise decisions are made about the land and the wild places around us.

Andrew Bachell

Andrew speaking at the 'Heart of Scotland' launch

PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN LELLAND

Skye high: upland path project reaches one-year milestone

The 'Skye Wild Ways' programme has hit the halfway mark following a successful 12 months of work and training around Glen Sligachan.

The two-year project set out to train local young (and older) people – and some from further afield – in essential pathwork skills by getting them involved in key restoration work.

During the first 12-month phase, 22 trainees and a number of volunteers have worked alongside Trust staff and professional contractors to help upgrade access routes into some of Skye's most spectacular landscapes.

In November, the students from the Crofting and Countryside Skills Course at the West Highland College of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) carried out work at Glen Sligachan, which included rebuilding cross drains and a water bar, and raising the path higher to avoid flooding from the river

On a separate section of the glen, students from the Elmwood campus of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) spent a sunny week in May rebuilding an 80m stretch of the path as part of their Conservation and Countryside Management Course. The work involved surfacing and ditching as well as building water bars, cross drains and anchor bars.

Donald MacKenzie said: "We were delighted with the work of both groups who got stuck into the work with great energy and vigour.

"Their contribution has made a great difference to the path, which will be appreciated by walkers and will protect the surrounding habitat for years to come.

"And we hope they've learned some useful skills which will stand them in good stead in their future careers."

LIGHT TOUCH

The project also involved working with volunteers, including local people and a four-day John Muir Trust work party in the spring. They worked on Glen Sligachan, Bla Bheinn and the Elgol to Camasunary coastal path.

Alongside the training, path renovation work in this wild and remote part of Skye has forged ahead. At a steep, 443m section of Beinn Dearg Mheadhonach that was in the early stages of erosion, contractors Turnstone carried out repair work using pre-emptive and 'light-touch' techniques. This will prevent further deterioration for many years to come.

Meanwhile, Arran Footpath Partnership spearheaded a second phase of repair work at Druim Hain on the Sligachan to Loch Coruisk path. In contrast to the stormy weather they had battled with during phase one, the workers benefited from an unusually mild and dry winter to complete 415m of footpath construction well on schedule.

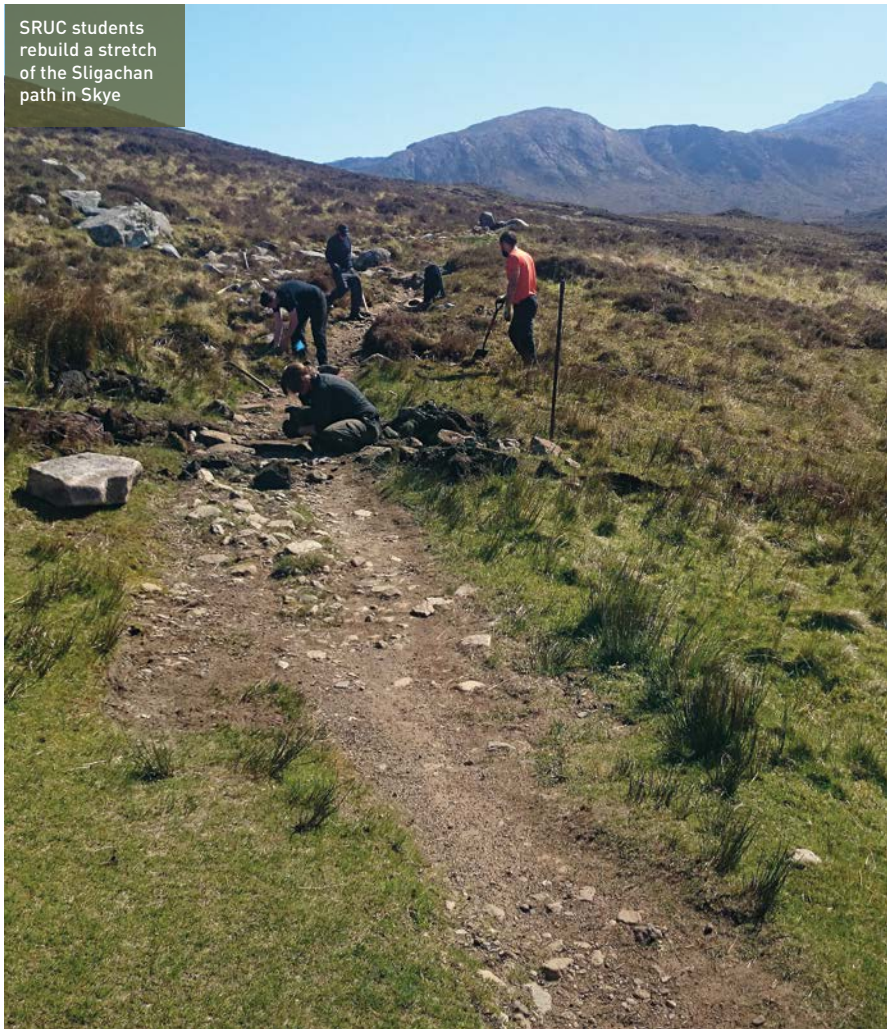
Restoration work also involved 970 square metres of landscaping to help revegetate a scar up to 6m wide in places and getting broader by the year.

The second half of the Skye Wild Ways path project will see major contract work on a loop path at Allt Daraich, a scenic gorge on the route between Sligachan and Glamaig, which should be completed by February 2018. In addition, we aim to complete the third and final phase of work on the Druim Hain path, and carry out some smaller repairs on Bla Bheinn.

Sarah Lewis, the Trust's Conservation Ranger on Skye, said: "The students from both UHI and SRUC enjoyed themselves and will be returning to get more training and experience next year and perhaps even further into the future. We're really pleased that we've struck up two valuable partnerships with these colleges.

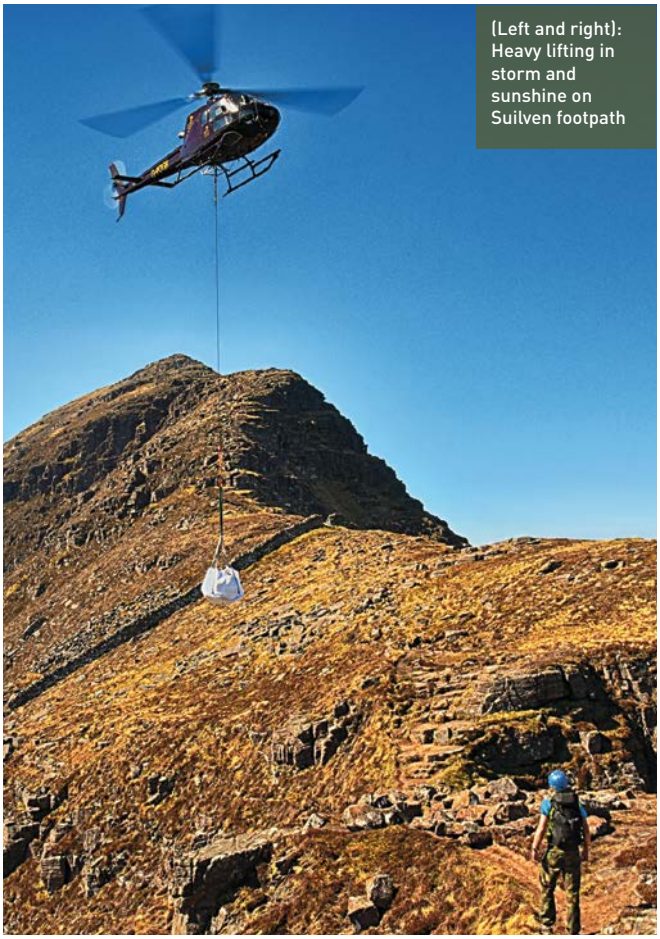
"We're delighted that, thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund, we've been able to provide such useful training and work experience within this magical landscape."

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS PUDDEPHAT



SRUC students rebuild a stretch of the Sligachan path in Skye

PHOTOGRAPH: ALASTAIR HOGG



(Left and right): Heavy lifting in storm and sunshine on Suilven footpath

Trust spearheads £200k transformation of Suilven path

In Assynt, the first phase of the project to repair and upgrade sections of the path leading to Suilven was completed in the summer.

Before the work began, a badly trampled route across boggy ground on the main approach to the mountain had widened into an unsightly scar, up to 30m wide in places.

After four months of intensive work involving two path contractors, ten workers and an airlift of over 100 tonnes of rock, the path has now been transformed into a robust path that looks natural and blends in with the surrounding landscape.

By creating an improved path line that encourages walkers to stick to a single route through the landscape, damage to the surrounding blanket bog will be reduced. This in turn will help halt or reverse the loss of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere from the peat soil.

The Suilven Path Project is a partnership between the Assynt Foundation, which owns and manages Suilven on behalf of the community, and the Trust, which has been overseeing the repair work. It is being carried out as part of the Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership (CALLP), a five-year Heritage Lottery funded programme involving 14 local land management and community interest organisations.

Chris Goodman, Footpaths Officer for the John Muir Trust, says that the work has made a huge difference. "At the start of the project I always walked out to the work site in wellies as the ground was so peaty and soft but now it's a joy to be able to walk out in boots or a good pair of trainers without getting wet feet. Contractors ACT Heritage and Arran Footpaths have done an excellent job of constructing the path and stabilising steep mobile ground."

Andy Taylor, who set up ACT Heritage having learnt his trade originally through the local Culag Community Woodland Trust training course, said: "It was a big job. I'm really grateful I got the opportunity to be involved with the work and really proud to have left my mark on Suilven."

Work began on the Suilven path in 2016, after the project – which had been nominated by Berghaus on behalf of the Trust and the Assynt Foundation – topped an international online poll worth £18,000. The Trust went on to raise a further £50,000, which in turn triggered further funding, bringing the total to £200,000.

Meanwhile, spare a thought for Arran Footpaths team member Alec McMullen, who, over the course of the contract, walked 450 miles just getting to and from the remote work site every day.

Further work will be carried out on the path in spring 2018.

● The Trust and the Assynt Foundation would like to thank everyone who supported the Suilven Path project, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage, the European Outdoor Conservation Association and the Scottish Mountaineering Trust for enabling this to happen.

● *You can find out more information about the project on the CALLP website :* **coigach-assynt.org/**

Get involved

If you're interested in finding out more about these projects, feel free to get in touch:

SUILVEN: chris.goodman@johnmuirtrust.org
SKYE: sarah.lewis@johnmuirtrust.org
donaldg.glenelg@btinternet.com

In brief...

Court rules against Creag Riabhach judicial review
A judicial review taken out by Wildland Ltd, which manages Glenfeshie and parts of the northern Highlands, has failed in its bid to block the Creag Riabhach wind farm near Altnaharra. The presiding judge, Lord Boyd of Duncansby, told the court that his ruling was concerned solely with ensuring that due process had been followed.

Loch Ness wind farm rejected
A wind farm proposed for the hills above Glen Urquhart has been refused consent. The Trust joined with local communities in objecting to the Cnoc an Eas development, which would have comprised 13 turbines up to 126.5 metres high on a site 9km west of Drumnadrochit. The decision, by a reporter acting on behalf of the Scottish Government, was welcomed by the Trust, community groups and the local MSP Kate Forbes.

'Chilling effect' of new law
Scotland's voluntary sector has warned that the Scottish Lobbying Act 2016 will impede charities by forcing them to record every interaction between their staff and MSPs – even casual conversations. Martin Syme, the Chief Executive of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations said: "The Act makes no distinction between charities lobbying for public benefit and the kind of for-profit lobbying which oil, tobacco and fracking companies seem very good at. It will have a chilling effect on our sector because it will make lobbying for public good a regulated activity."

National Park Cities
Daniel Raven-Ellison, the guerilla geographer behind the drive to turn London into a 'National Park City' has clarified his vision at a special event in the Glasgow Science Centre hosted by the Trust.

"It's not about creating another National Park," he told the audience of environmental and outdoor professionals. "It's about creating a National Park City, which is a different thing. National Parks are a brilliant idea that exist in the wildest parts of the UK. We want to bring that idea and all its benefits into cities, while recognising the differences."

PHOTOGRAPH: TRANSCOTLAND

View WNW from Schiehallion to WLA14 – site of a recently refused major wind farm

Keeping it wild – a call for help

A new Planning Bill going through the Scottish Parliament this autumn sees a rare opportunity to secure a change in policy that would give Wild Land Areas the same level of protection from wind farms as National Scenic Areas and National Parks.

The Trust's campaigning – with strong support from our members and supporters – played a vital role in the battle to achieve significant protection for 42 Wild Land Areas in Scottish Planning Policy three years ago.

But there is still work to do. Ambiguity in the policy allowed for the approval of a wind farm at Creag Riabhach, on Wild Land Area 37, which the Trust fears could act as a Trojan Horse for further speculative application in and near Wild Land Areas. Despite improved protection on paper, wild land is still gradually being lost.

That's not what the public wants. A Scotland-wide poll in the early summer (conducted by YouGov and commissioned by the Trust) shows that an overwhelming 80 per cent of the public believe that Scotland's Wild Land Areas should continue to be protected from large-scale infrastructure. In contrast just five per cent disagree.

With that resounding public mandate in mind, we're looking for your help to take the message to politicians that it's now time to guarantee clear-cut protection for wild land.

You can help by writing to your constituency or regional MSPs (although energy is controlled by Westminster, Holyrood has responsibility for planning) asking them to support an amendment to planning policy. If you live outside Scotland, you can write directly to the Scottish Government's Planning Minister, Kevin Stewart.

Improved protection for wild land in the Planning Bill would bring benefits, not just for nature, but for local economies and rural communities.

Mel Nicoll (Trust Campaigns Coordinator)

TAKE ACTION

- Find out more, including ideas on how to frame your letter at **johnmuirtrust.org/keepitwild**
- Share any responses with **mel.nicoll@johnmuirtrust.org** and contact her with any questions or offers of help
- Read **johnmuirtrust.org/energyandwildlandpolicy**

Energy and wild land

Major energy developments remain a serious threat to wild places.
The Trust recognises the need for renewable energy projects and supports government targets to cut carbon emissions.
But we believe these goals can be achieved without wrecking wild land – which itself helps offset the impact of climate change, for example by minimising flooding and retaining carbon in healthy peat bogs.
In areas near wild land, the Trust supports sensitively-sited, community-scale renewable energy schemes that can produce clean, green energy without significantly affecting wild land.

International cooperation: Building a drystone dyke at Glenlude

PHOTOGRAPH: KAREN PURVIS

Euro students mend walls and build bridges at Glenlude and Schiehallion

A team of 18 young people from Germany, Spain and Scotland from disadvantaged backgrounds spent a productive and fun fortnight in the late summer repairing and building drystone walls, deer fences, footpaths and bridges along with the John Muir Trust.

The first week was spent building a 26-metre drystone wall on an old sheep stell at the Trust's Glenlude property and building a bridge at the Border Forest Trust's Gameshope Estate above Tweedsmuir.

The second week saw the students travel to Highland Perthshire, where they spent a rest day climbing Schiehallion, erected a deer fence at Dun Coillich woodland with volunteers from the Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust; spruced up the clan trail around Loch Rannoch; repaired paths near Aberfeldy and visited the magnificent wooded gorge at Killiecrankie.

On the last Saturday of their visit, the young people helped out at the Kinloch Rannoch Highland Gathering where they were presented with their John Muir Award certificates before celebrating at the cèilidh.

● *The European Youth Work Camp was funded by EWOCA – a funding programme in North West Rhine area in Germany and Erasmus+.*

Join in...

We have a number of local members' groups, so come along to a gathering near you to meet like-minded people, hear a range of interesting talks and stock up on festive cards and gifts.

21 October 1.30pm – 5.00pm North West England Members' Gathering (Cumbria)
Peter Pearson, Chair, will update everyone on the Trust's three-year lease of Glenridding Common. We'll also hear from local 'man on the ground', Pete Barron, who works on the summit of Helvellyn and Striding and Swirral Edge. Register for free: **johnmuirtrust.org/NWE**

8 November 7.30pm – 9.30pm North East Scotland Members' Gathering (Aberdeen)
The Trust's Chief Executive, Andrew Bachell, will provide a special presentation on "Wildness and Nature – The challenge for public policy and private practice". Register for free: **johnmuirtrust.org/NES**

18 November 9.30am – 5.00pm Southern Members' Gathering (Bristol)
There's a full day of talks lined up – including a presentation by Andrew Bachell, CEO, on Knoydart – where the group will focus on "habitat restoration and recovery". Book your place for £20 (includes lunch): **johnmuirtrust.org/SOUTHERN** (or call Fergus Macbeth on 01275 373360)

25 November 1.30pm – 5.00pm Edinburgh Members' Gathering (Edinburgh)
A range of speakers – including Schiehallion Land Manager Dr Liz Auty – will focus on land reform.
Register for free: **johnmuirtrust.org/EDINBURGH**

Tell us what you think...

Since its inception last year more than 270 members have kindly donated time to participate in the Membership Research Panel (MRP) – a series of telephone interviews, workshops and surveys.

Results to date have already provided a wealth of important insight that will help guide our work in the future.

The results so far indicate that members rate the Trust highly, citing its relevance as an organisation that promotes the value of wildness and protects the biodiversity of wild places.

As expected from a broad-based organisation, there is a wide spectrum of opinion on a whole range of issues within the Trust.

Questions thrown up so far include:

- How can we reach out and attract a younger audience?
- How do we continue a balanced approach within our communications that recognises the need for renewables, while staying true to our mission to protect wild land?
- How do we make the Trust more relevant outside Scotland?
- Can we conduct more partnership working alongside other environmental and conservation organisations?
- Should the Trustees have a stronger voice within our communications channels?
- How do we stay politically neutral at a time of great uncertainty?
- Should we conduct a wider range of campaigning activity?
- How do we strike a balance that preserves the wildness of our properties while providing signage and interpretation?

As a next step, we have arranged focus groups to sound out members' views on the Trust's communications channels and publications.

If you are interested in signing up for the MRP, please use the following link and we'll be in touch soon: **johnmuirtrust.org/mrp**

Launching the forest partnership in the foothills of Schiehallion

Why Forest Enterprise Scotland is backing the Heart of Scotland project

In Highland Perthshire, Forest Enterprise Scotland looks after some of the most extensive and impressive publicly owned woodlands in the country, including Queen's View at Loch Tummel, the Black Wood of Rannoch, and Faskally Wood – which attracts 60,000 visitors each October to view the Enchanted Forest.

"It's a fabulously mixed beat, with native Caledonian pine forest, remnant ancient semi-natural broadleaf woodlands and productive conifer forests, says Doug Howieson, the Tay Forest District Manager of Forest Enterprise." It adds to the beauty of the landscape and is highly regarded by visitors and our timber customers."

As an executive agency that operates under the direction of the Scottish Government, Forest Enterprise currently has a renewed focus on productive coniferous forestry to help regenerate rural economies. "At the same time, we continue to manage existing ancient semi-natural and new native woodland."

Forest Enterprise got involved in the Heart of Scotland Forest Partnership after being approached by the Trust's Land Manager at Schiehallion, Liz Auty.

"We felt that some of our existing native woodland fitted very nicely within this emerging project and so we wanted to support it," says Doug. "A big part of the site is within a National Scenic Area so the creation of new native woodland by the John Muir Trust and other partners, alongside native woodland previously developed by Forest Enterprise, will further enhance this special landscape."

Doug believes the commercial operation of Forest Enterprise can thrive alongside the nature conservation priorities of the other partners – Highland Perthshire Community Land Trust, Kynachan Estate, the Woodland Trust Scotland and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. "Both objectives can work harmoniously together," he says.

He also points to the potential economic benefits of native woodland restoration. "Clearly there will be jobs created as the project develops. And in the future, there can potentially be a productive element to the native species that are planted – for example, providing a hardwood element of timber for industry."

● *This is the first in a series of interviews with our five Heart of Scotland partners*

PHOTOGRAPHS: KEVIN LELLAND

First step on the road to a future forest wonderland

In blazing late July sunshine, the Heart of Scotland Forest Partnership was launched at the foot of Schiehallion. It brings together community, conservation, public and private landowners with the aim of transforming a vast area of Highland Perthshire into a rich, vibrant landscape.

The Trust's Liz Auty, who has been the main driving force behind the initiative, gave the opening welcome: "It has taken many years and a lot of passion to bring everyone together and I'm so glad that we're all finally here today."

Six tree saplings were planted (one for each partner) to mark the occasion, before the gathering moved on to a perfect spot from which to view land that will one day be flourishing with Scots pine, aspen, birch, rowan, willow and other species.

Nature writer Jim Crumley, who attended the event, commented in his *Courier* newspaper column: "Nothing on Earth responds to encouragement like nature, and encouragement on this scale will prompt nature to respond in ways that may surprise us all."

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Turning 21

As the John Muir Award celebrates its 21st anniversary, **Rich Rowe** looks at an environmental scheme that has grown from a John Muir Trust pilot project in Scotland to something that has touched hundreds of thousands of people of all ages and walks of life across the UK

"IT IS AMAZING how little the John Muir Award has changed down the years," smiles Dave Picken as he reflects on a scheme that was first mooted in 1993. Together with early Trust staff and volunteers such as Ben Tindall, Graham White and Terry Isles, Dave was one of the initial architects of the Award, and continued to develop the scheme alongside other duties until he left the Trust for pastures new in 2011.

"I was approached to develop the idea," explains Dave. "The thinking was that young people were just not getting involved in conservation and we wanted to try and fill that gap, but with a John Muir context to the work."

In April 1995, having secured funding from Scottish Natural Heritage, the Trust conducted a feasibility study that examined membership of environmental NGOs and youth organisations across Scotland to see what was in place at the time, and how they worked. The results revealed that while at least half a million young Scots were active members of youth organisations (including 17,000 as members of environmental bodies), less than 5,000 were actively engaged in conservation work.

The study also highlighted the fact that few of these groups had an environmental agenda. The challenge then was how to bring the vast majority of young people (and adults) into conservation, rather than just a fraction of one per cent.

FREE AND FLEXIBLE

"The idea was to create a prestigious environmental award scheme that would fit within the youth side, plus be attractive to other organisations," explains Dave. "It wasn't meant to just be about young people, but we saw that as an obvious way in to begin with."

At the time, there was much debate about the form and structure of a potential scheme. Gradually, the pieces started to come together: it should be free, flexible and simple to use; applicable across both formal and informal education; create, or be part of, a meaningful experience for participants; and be inclusive of everyone irrespective of academic or educational ability. It avoided any sense that it was some kind of exam.

Perhaps above all in those very early days, a compelling case was needed to take it to other organisations. After all, it was they, rather than the Trust, that would deliver the scheme. "When it came to actual delivery, the Trust was so small that we needed other organisations to incorporate it into their own work and essentially deliver a shared agenda for us," says Dave. "It was a bit like a friendly virus!"

The result was a simply structured scheme with four integrated challenges at its heart: discover a wild place; explore it; conserve it; and share these experiences with others. The Award comprised three levels – Discovery, Explorer and Conserver – with each requiring progressively greater effort and commitment, but with all four challenges repeated at each level.

Initially, a fifth challenge involved learning about John Muir, although this was subsequently dropped. "My feeling was that it would mean pushing our agenda too much," recalls Dave. "If we got the other four sections right – which reflect his approach anyway – then people would learn about Muir along the way."

PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

The fact that the structure of the John Muir Award has changed so little in its 21 years can be traced back not just to the feasibility study but also to a year-long pilot that explored whether the model could fit within a variety of different organisations.

Back then, the Trust had just three full-time staff, so the idea was to adopt a light-touch approach. A partnership model allowed other organisations to integrate their own activities, and gave them the flexibility to shape Award participation to their own needs, rather than just follow a set programme or syllabus.

The decision to establish a structure and essentially hand it over for others to fill with activity proved to be enlightened. "It was other organisations who delivered the Award so it was only right that they should have shared ownership of it," stresses Dave.

Between June 1995 and June 1996, the Trust partnered with half a dozen organisations in Scotland to test the model and iron out any kinks. They were a deliberately disparate group, from the Guides to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, youth groups and clubs, two primary schools and a high school.

Clockwise from left: Outward Bound, Whinlatter Forest, Cumbria; Trust's Nigel Hawkins and Environment Minister Lord Jamie Lindsay at launch of the Award in 1997; Rob Bushby and Dave Picken; Award staff team, 2013

"The John Muir Award tied a ribbon around all our activities – it combined educational and environmental principles with an inclusive way of working"

Rob Bushby

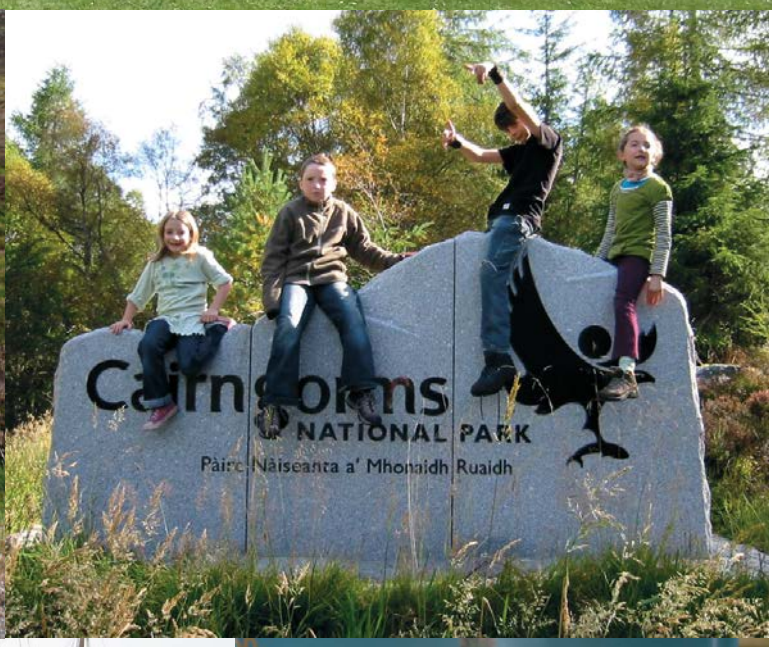
All had committed leaders who were eager to see how the John Muir Award could sit alongside their existing programmes. Scottish Natural Heritage funded the pilot phase. "The best £16,000 SNH ever spent!" the grants officer reflected over a decade later.

As it turned out, the pilot not only tested the model, but also created one of the Award's most enduring relationships to date. Having been involved in 1996, the Green Team, an Edinburgh-based organisation working with young people to restore and conserve wild places, remains intimately involved today.

"Ever since the Green Team was asked to pilot the Award on our early Green Volunteers programme, we have continued to use it as a core component, embedding it into every programme we deliver," explains Penny Radway, Green Team Manager. "The four Challenges fit very naturally with our own organisational aims and outcomes."

For the past two decades, the Green Team and John Muir Award have evolved together, sharing a common ethos to support

→ continued



Discovering, Exploring, Conserving and Sharing: the John Muir Award is accessible, inclusive and non-competitive

people to learn about and connect with the natural environment through fun activities.

"For both organisations, I think enjoyment and exploration are at the heart of this connection, where people – and in the case of the Green Team, specifically young people – find things out for themselves," continues Penny. "This could be as simple as seeing what delights lie around the next corner of a footpath, or coming across animal tracks, or a chance sighting of a damselfly or deer."

With the pilot having achieved its aims, mini-milestones soon followed. The first John Muir Award certificates were presented in June 1996 to participants from Dunbar Primary School, Venture Scotland and the Green Team. In February the following year, there was a public launch of the Award at Dunbar Leisure Centre.

MAJOR MILESTONES

Dave Picken's direction through this early phase led to a grant of £70,000 from the National Lottery Charities Board plus a further £20,000 from various Trust funds, with the money used to develop the scheme within the youth sector for the next three years. The John Muir Award was officially up and running.

One person with perhaps the longest association with the John Muir Award is Rob Bushby. When Rob came on board with the Trust in February 2001, he arrived from Venture Scotland, another organisation that had been involved since the feasibility study.

"I remember in my previous role seeing its value in terms of how it knitted together our diverse activities," explains Rob. "I talked at the time about how it effectively tied a ribbon around everything that we did. I just really liked how it combined educational and environmental principles, and its inclusive way of working with people."

When Rob took on the role, it was still small scale with less than 1,000 Awards achieved each year. Alongside the all-important fundraising needed to support the scheme, he began to develop the building blocks that underpin the Award today, from robust processes to improved guidance for Provider organisations and effective communication of the work of the Award to a wider audience.

And the milestones kept on coming. In 2002, mountaineer Doug Scott presented the 7,000th Award at a ceremony in Holyrood Park, Edinburgh. It has since grown at a rate of 10-20 per cent a year. The 100,000th Award was celebrated in 2010, and the 250,000th in 2015. To date, more than 325,000 Awards have been presented, with the half-million mark now very much in sight. "Such growth is very welcome, but it's important to say that's not the end game," says Rob. "It's much more about positive individual experiences, influencing the culture of organisations, and being part of progressive agendas."

BEYOND SCOTLAND

That desire for progression can be seen in several key decisions. In 2010, following an internal restructure, new members of staff were recruited to specifically focus on two key areas: inclusion and education. This in turn allowed the growing Award team to be more involved with public policy.

"We mapped out how the activity we were seeing spanned an entire school curriculum rather than just parts of it," says Rob. "All of a sudden we had a platform to demonstrate government agendas in action. We were making significant contributions to grassroots outdoor learning and giving the Trust a voice at national policy level."

The Award took a big step when it was introduced in Wales in 2000 and took on a member of staff – a move driven by a couple of Trust members on the ground, Rob Collister and Del Davies. As it evolved further, the Award tailored its approach to the different

Rising with nature

Adrian Moran knows more than most about the power of nature to cleanse and heal. A group leader for drug and alcohol rehabilitation charity Phoenix Futures in Barnsley for many years, Adrian has seen first-hand how taking service users away from hectic, urban environments and out into wild, green spaces can have a transformative effect. "There's something very calming about being outdoors," he says. "It's incredibly good for mental health."

The charity has been lauded for a pioneering therapeutic intervention programme known as Recovery through Nature (RtN) that gets its service users involved in practical conservation on projects in all kinds of settings.

For the past seven years, the programme that has been further enhanced through a partnership with the John Muir Award.

"When we first started RtN in Barnsley back in 2010, we had the Award very much in mind," explains Adrian. "At that time it was a standalone intervention, but we really wanted it incorporated into the programme."

By the end of that year, the John Muir Award was fully embedded within the RtN programme, adding even greater value, purpose and structure to the charity's efforts to help people on their steps to recovery.

In Scotland, the RtN programme, managed by John Deeney, a strong supporter of the Award, has created the Phoenix Forest – a blossoming new native woodland at the Trust's Glenlude property (see below).

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LINTERN

"We talk a lot in the recovery community about the importance of being socially included and having a purpose," says Adrian Moran. "By connecting people with similar life experiences and giving them something to focus on, the Award and our programme together help create the conditions for people to feel included."

In 2016, the Barnsley RtN group alone achieved 200 Discovery Awards, more than 50 Explorer Awards and two Conserver Awards – including one for Adrian. "The Conserver Award has been a big part of my own journey and an achievement that I hold dear," he says.

To celebrate the achievements of the Barnsley group, participants and staff recently gathered at Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve where they have built visitor structures to enable others to enjoy the surrounding landscape and wildlife.

It may seem a small thing, adds Adrian, but part of the appeal of the John Muir Award is the certificate element at the end. "For many service users, it's the first certificate they've ever received. That means a lot when you've had so many problems in your life. It's no wonder that I've seen people break down in tears when presented with them."

→ continued

circumstances in different parts of the UK.

"As well as growing influence in Scotland, we had a solid base in Wales, and some coverage in Northern Ireland," says Rob. "England – unusually - felt like the last piece in the jigsaw. The premise was that we needed funding to allow England to catch up."

This led to a successful application for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant that enabled the Award to replicate its Scotland staffing model south of the border.

Zak Lakota-Baldwin and Chris Packham with the 250,000th Award

PARK PARTNERS

One of the most important advances was the increasingly close relationships that the Award formed with National Parks across Britain, starting with the Cairngorms National Park.

With a formal partnership and a dedicated staff role in place with the Cairngorms National Park Authority since its creation in 2003, the Award was built almost into the DNA of the park from the very beginning. "It just gave us credibility from the off," says Rob.

It's also been a huge win for the park itself. Unlike many other National Parks around the UK, the Cairngorms National Park does not operate its own ranger service or directly deliver outdoor learning and education. Instead, the park's Outdoor Learning Officer supports and promotes the Award as part of his job, with delivery undertaken by a range of partners.

"The John Muir Award continues to be a superb way of exciting and enlightening people about the countryside," says Pete Crane, the park's Head of Visitor Services.

"Fortunately, the people we support undertake the Award in and around the park so the Discover and Explore aspects relate directly to the special qualities of the area. There's also a clear link to John Muir as one of the founders of the international National Park designation."

Meanwhile, with the Conserve dimension of the John Muir Award prompting participants to look after this special place, and the Sharing element raising awareness of its qualities, the Cairngorms National Park remains strongly supportive of the Award – a commitment spelled out in its latest five-year Partnership Plan.

"Since 2003, we've seen more than 28,000 Awards in the Cairngorms," says Pete. "That's a tremendous amount of people that have not only enjoyed, experienced and learnt about the park but also helped make it a better place and shared those experiences."

Such buy-in is typified by Grantown Grammar School which, alongside partners such as the RSPB and ranger services, has delivered the Award to S1 and S2 pupils (first and second year of secondary school) as part of its curriculum for over a decade.

As well as improving the pupils' understanding of the park's special qualities, Award involvement has also inspired many to become involved in environments elsewhere by signing up for a local Junior Ranger programme, volunteering with local rangers and getting a chance to attend a Europarc Junior Rangers Camp.

"Pupils have been to Latvia, Finland, Austria, Bavaria and Slovenia," explains Lorna Crane, who teaches learning support and outdoor learning at the school. "This has enabled pupils to inspire others and move towards a future working in environmental areas."

Earlier this year, S1 pupil Sol Misty Robson became the 1,000th recipient of the John Muir Award in the school – activity that equates to five years of conservation work locally. "Sol has a real love of the outdoors – her passion for learning in the environment shone through as she progressed through the Award," explains Lorna. "There are a lot of pupils just like her at the school."

Given its use throughout the area over such a long time, it's little surprise that Rob Bushby often points to the Trust's relationship with the National Park as a model of what a sustainable partnership looks like.

It's certainly proved a hugely effective model for others to reference – with the John Muir Award now used in all 15 of the UK's National Parks, including four that employ dedicated staff to work with the partnership.

GREATER REACH

While it has been moulded by John Muir Trust staff down the years, the Award has in turn helped shape the Trust and expand its reach.

Over the past decade in particular, the Trust has articulated a holistic view of what a modern conservation organisation should be – one that influences values across society, rather than being solely focused on wild land.

With that world view in mind, the John Muir Award has long served as a key tool for working with people across the whole spectrum of society. "I think it helps the Trust reach far beyond its membership demographic; it's a key part of the Trust's relevance today," believes Rob.

Meanwhile, the relationships established overlap into other areas of the Trust's work. The John Muir Award has been the Trust's main activity in Wales since 2002, with well-respected bilingual connections, while its presence in Cumbria for 15 years, and long-standing partnership with the Lake District National Park, helped create the conditions for the Trust to explore taking over the management of Glenridding Common.

Favoured by funders and politicians, the John Muir Award has also proved vital in terms of relating the Trust in a meaningful way to a whole raft of social agendas – from health and education to employment skills and inclusion – without being unwieldy, or resource-heavy.

In short, it's been a huge asset – a point that was recognised by the Trust's then Chief Executive Stuart Brooks in the organisation's 2016 Annual Report when he described the John Muir Award as "a global leader in terms of connecting people from all backgrounds to the positive values of nature".

Now, as the Award heads into its third decade, the dozen-strong Award team across Britain is clear on how they'd like to see it develop further.

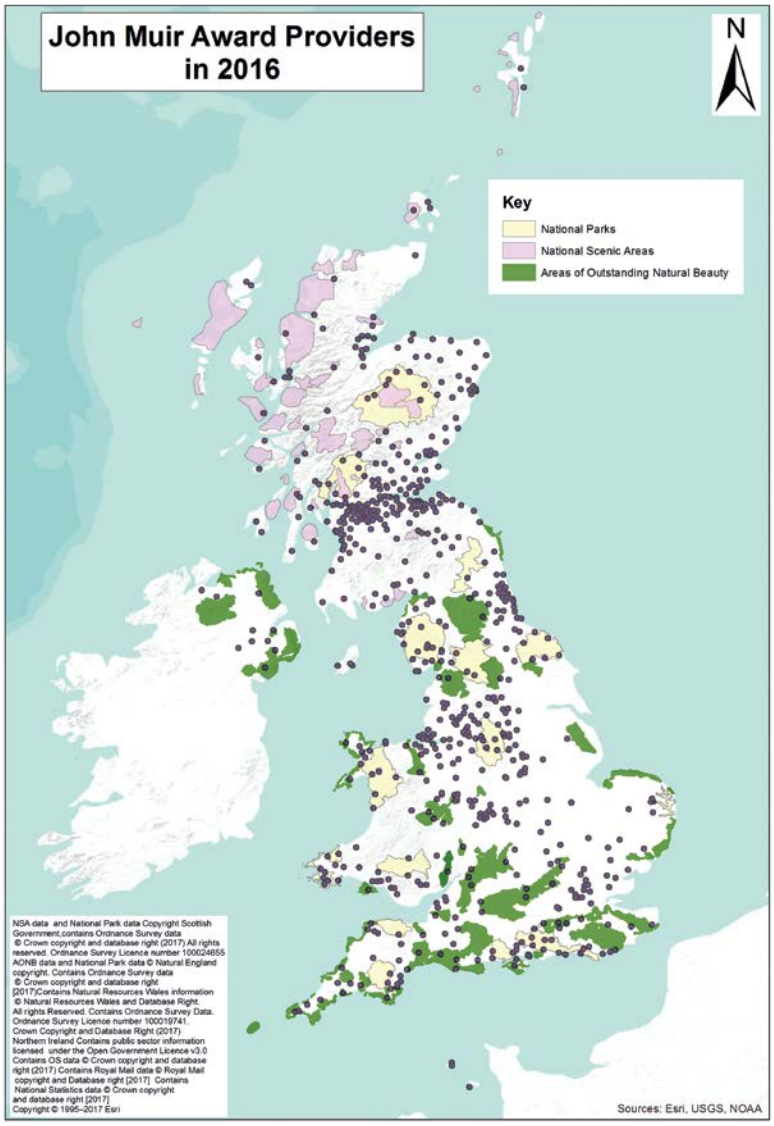
"It's about continuing to create partnerships that are relevant for the Trust, nurturing existing relationships, and seeing where they all go," says Rob. "We now also have a degree of influence from the grassroots up to national policy in Scotland, and we'd like to see that replicated in England and Wales too."

But alongside such key ambitions, the Award will also continue to be about individuals and their experiences of wild places, wherever they may be in their lives.

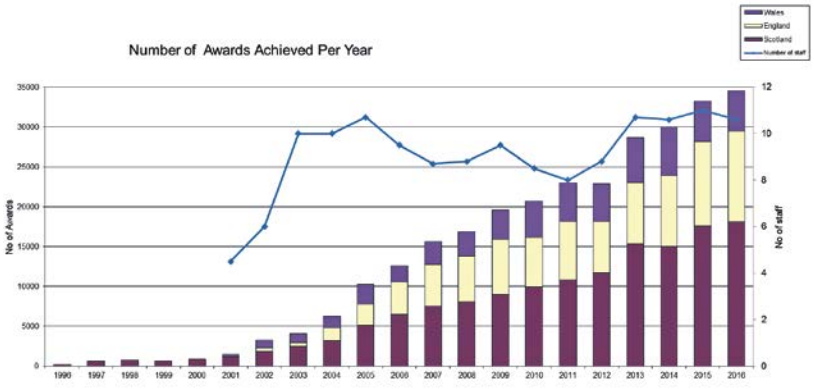
"Back in 2005, I started managing the Cairngorms National Park partnership with the John Muir Award," says Pete Crane. "To increase my understanding, my family and I did our own Award – and it's still something we talk about with great fondness."

Many, many more people will likely feel the same way over the coming years.

About the author
Rich Rowe is a freelance outdoors writer and a former editor of the *Journal*



PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE PYPER



PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

Angels with dirty hands

Twenty one years on from its involvement in the initial pilot, the John Muir Award remains as important as ever for the Green Team as it supports young people to learn more about the natural world and each other.

"It was the first environmental award scheme in the UK and to this day has no viable rival," believes manager, Penny Radway.

Today, the Green Team's volunteer-led weekend programmes include a dedicated John Muir Award mentor who talks to individual youngsters about their involvement in the scheme as they progress through it.

"All our adult volunteers are introduced to the Award at an early stage of their involvement and take part in it alongside the young people they support," explains Penny.

Although most participants achieve the Discovery level Award, many others progress through the Explorer and Conserver Awards, taking increasing responsibility for their participation, expanding their horizons and experiencing new activities.

One recent highlight involved a group of girls from Knox Academy, Haddington who achieved their Discovery Award based at Butterdean Wood, East Lothian.

Supported by the local Ranger Service, they cleared footpaths, removed invasive plants, foraged for wild food, cooked on a campfire and made angel halos from natural materials.

Their crowning glory, however, and something that very much met the Sharing challenge came just before the girls were presented with their Award cerificates in Butterdean Wood, when they performed their own composition of a Green Angels song, with the chorus:

Who are we? GIRLS – we wear our green halos
Who are we? GIRLS – we are the Green Angels!

Spirit of the mountains

Romany Garnett pays homage to the golden eagle – the creature that perhaps more than any other symbolises Scotland's wildest, most rugged landscapes

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK HAMBLIN/SCOTLANDBIGPICTURE.COM

SILHOUETTED AGAINST the sky as it soars above a mountain peak, wing tips splayed, the golden eagle is an awe-inspiring sight. Majestic in slow motion, the two-metre wingspan gives the flight a steadiness and power that is matchless. Its hunting prowess has been honed over centuries, driven by instinctive wisdom.

Everything about this bird is impressive. Sharp eyes that are focused and intense. A beak with a yellow base that hooks round to a grey-black tip. The velocity at which it hurtles through the sky when hunting. The powerful clutch of the talons. A wildness whose depth is hard to fathom.

To understand the eagle more intimately is to immerse oneself in the wildest, remotest uplands, far from human habitation. In these sweeping, bleak areas of bog and open moorland, where wind-clipped vegetation clings to the mountain tops and all vestiges of civilisation are absent – here dwells the golden eagle. Nature writer Jim Crumley describes the creature as "the spirit of the high and lonely places."

They are substantial birds, with the females averaging 5kg and males slightly less at 3.5kg. Yet they have a deceptive lightness. In his book, *The Eagles Way*, Crumley observes one bird, which, as if lifted on a breath, "soars on unbeating wings, gains fifty feet in a moment and drifts away east, still climbing."

Their sharp eyes, eight times more precise than a human's, can pinpoint a flicker in the grass from great distances. They tilt back their wings and can reach over 100mph as they take the fearsome plunge towards their target.

Their diet varies between areas and seasons. When food is scarce they rely on carrion. In the spring and summer, live prey is more common and can include field mice, pigeons, ptarmigans, fox cubs, mountain hares and deer calves.

Their territories, whose range can vary from 50 to 150 sq km, are defended fiercely – especially during the breeding season – by a pair of eagles. Their area often overlaps with others and at certain times of year they can tolerate shared hunting ground. "It seemed to me that their territories had more to do with wind direction than physical boundaries," says Jim Crumley.

Moray-based author, lecturer and broadcaster Roy Dennis is one of the world's foremost authorities on the golden eagle. Director and founder of the international Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation, he has for decades specialised in raptor conservation, and has been involved with reintroductions of osprey, red kite and sea eagle. In 1982, while working for the RSBP, he was one of two organisers who helped carry out the first full survey of golden eagles in Scotland.

"We needed to know how many eagles there were. We counted 424 pairs. The most recent survey, two years ago, found about 500 pairs." Although this should be a cause for optimism, Roy says that "there is a lot more work to do – in my view, Britain as a whole should have at least 1,000 pairs, maybe more, including on low ground."

The golden eagle is at the top of the food chain and has no natural predators – so that shortfall is mainly due to human activity, such as egg collecting, poisoning and other forms of persecution. Roy recalls one incident when he helped recover a golden eagle chick which had been stolen and taken to England. "We knew the nest the chick had come from and brought it back nearly three weeks later. And the parents came and fed it."

"They spend most of their time perching and their deep brown plumage and paler golden feathers around the back of the neck help them blend into the landscape"

Unfortunately, not all such crimes have a happy ending. In 2007, Roy's foundation fitted its first GPS satellite tracker to a chick at Glenfeshie in the Cairngorms National Park. "Alma, as we called her, was found poisoned two years later in Angus."

Since then, the satellite tracking programme has helped reduce persecution by pinpointing what Roy calls "black holes" where raptors tended to disappear. "From tracking, we could see the places where the young birds were going. What became evident to us were black holes, where adults were being killed by illegal persecution. Young eagles would then go into these places because of the absence of competition. So, as one was killed, another would move in."

The tracking programme, Roy believes, helped influence policy and legislation, including the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011, which introduced 'vicarious liability', making landowners responsible for illegal persecution carried out by gamekeepers.

"There is definitely less persecution now from small-scale land managers; this is quite noticeable," says Roy – although he believes that on some grouse moors the problem is as serious as ever, aggravated by the use of specialised equipment and rifles with night sights.

Satellite tracking is also helping protect eagles by getting the public more involved. People have been able to follow individual birds via a map-based website, so there is a growing public interest in the golden eagle and the threats it faces.

Tracking has also helped us better

Main: Golden eagle pictured at Strathaird
Below: Close relation: Sea eagle on the look-out

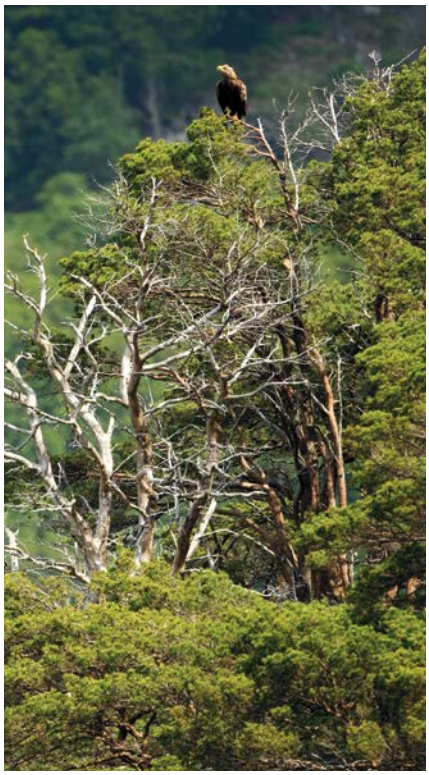
understand what Roy calls the "cultural behaviour" of the golden eagle, including their distribution and flight paths.

The project has discovered that golden eagles that have grown up in places where they can see people walking may be more likely to breed near where people live.

"And from tracking, we have learned that they move around more than we had previously thought." Yet surprisingly, none of Roy's satellite-tracked birds has ever been to the Hebrides – which he says suggests "there is clearly a divide between the eagles here and those in the Hebrides."

So when are the best times to see the golden eagle in its full glory? Because they rarely eat where they kill, preferring instead to carry their prey to a favourite place, they are elusive.

Their eyries – which can be a massive confusion of sticks and heather as yearly repairs are piled on top of the old ones – are usually balanced near the edges of inaccessible cliffs and crags. They spend most of their time perching, and their deep brown plumage and paler golden feathers around the back of the neck help them blend into the landscape.



Early spring is the best time to watch their spectacular courting displays. The fullness of flight can then be watched with awe as every fibre is used to tear through the sky. It's always a special moment on Quinag when I see one soaring overhead.

It feels like a privilege to live alongside these creatures. Golden eagles awaken in our imagination a faint desire to be more like them, to be more primal and wild. From an eagle's viewpoint, all our trappings of modernity and civilisation appear suddenly futile. They have a special quality that is created by living in the harshest of climates and the most remote places. They have a resilience almost mystical in essence.

The qualities in the golden eagle are those that we as humans lack and perhaps the golden eagle, above any other creature, symbolises what it is to be wild and free.

As Jim Crumley writes: "They inhabit the world, this three-dimensional territory, with a mastery of airspace as utter as any creature that ever drew breath."

About the author
Romany Garnett is the Trust's Conservation Officer for Quinag

Deer count in north west Scotland

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

Scotland's uplands have suffered generations of overgrazing – but as **Mike Daniels** reports, there are now encouraging signs that change could be on the horizon

Deer under the spotlight

FOR CENTURIES, the environmental impact of deer has been a running sore across much of Scotland's wild land. The cultural legacy of Victorian sport shooting has left the Highlands with deer densities tens of times higher than in the rest of the global red deer range, with serious implications for natural vegetation and the species that depend on it.

Many of our rare, stunted, cliff-clinging, species would be flourishing and abundant if they were able to escape their grazing-imposed confinement. Natural treelines and montane scrub would be widespread and much of our wild land would be a three-dimensional woodland mosaic, rather than a two-dimensional burnt and grazed heather monoculture.

NO STEP CHANGE

There may, however, be a glimmer of light at the end of this 200-year tunnel. A report commissioned by the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Roseanna Cunningham, and published by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in October 2016, acknowledged that in many parts of Scotland, browsing and trampling by high deer populations are causing significant damage to protected areas, native woodlands and peatlands.

It further contended that the problem is a major impediment to achieving Scottish Government public policy targets for protected conservation areas, woodland expansion and climate change.

The SNH review recognises that there has been some progress in deer management over the past two years.

But it concludes that there has not yet been the required "step change" sought by a previous environment committee two years ago.

In response to the SNH Report, and to a subsequent inquiry (to which the Trust and others gave written and oral evidence), Holyrood's cross-party Environment Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) Committee produced a report of its own in April 2017 for the Cabinet Secretary.

It concluded that "deer are still impacting significantly on the natural heritage" and called for urgent action to address the problem.

It further expressed concern about whether current powers are adequate, and insisted that "the Scottish Government needs to act to replace the existing legislation with a simple, effective back-stop power that is fit for purpose … and will ensure the public interest is delivered".

This was followed in early May 2017 by the first-ever full debate in the Scottish Parliament on deer management.

Then, in June 2017, the Cabinet Secretary announced specific measures to tackle the problem.

These include:

- Urging the deer sector and SNH to do more to improve deer management planning, with progress to be reviewed in 2019 to consider whether a fundamental change is needed.
- Ensuring SNH uses its full range of enforcement powers in dealing with non-cooperative landowners.
- Setting up an independent group to look at deer management issues.
- Testing current intervention powers before making further legislative changes.

EARLY DAYS

On the face of it at least, the last 12 months has seen a significant political gear change and a stronger commitment to tackling the environmental damage caused by deer over the last two centuries.

This is very much welcomed by the Trust which can take some credit, along with others, in successfully lobbying for such measures over many years.

It is still early days and so far not a single extra deer has been culled as a result of all these debates and reports. It remains to be seen whether that theoretical commitment by the Scottish Government will be capable of delivering serious change in the face of entrenched resistance from many traditional land managers.

It will take sustained and committed political drive to push these necessary recommendations through.

But the prize will be a healthier environment that we can proudly hand down to future generations, in which deer will be part of the landscape, alongside woodland, wildlife and people.

About the author
Mike Daniels is the Trust's Head of Land Management

Lost words

With acrostic 'spells' by Robert Macfarlane and beautiful watercolour artwork by Jackie Morris, this enchanting collaboration conjures back to glorious life some natural words fading from usage. **Rob Bushby** looks at some of the highlights of a book for 'children aged from three to 100'

ROBERT MACFARLANE will be familiar to many as the author of a number of books about landscape, wildness and culture including *The Wild Places*, *Mountains of the Mind*, *The Old Ways* and *Landmarks* – and as the foreword writer for the John Muir Trust *Wild Nature Diary 2017*.

This newly published hardback focuses on words that are moving to the margins of many children's lives and stories – bluebell, dandelion, otter, kingfisher, acorn – and presents them as both challenge and celebration.

The challenge is to the culture in which we live – and it's a timely reminder that we should take a good, long look at what we value. For children and young people in particular – and arguably for all of us – experiences of nature and wild imagination are vital. Words and names can help us to interpret and express what we value. As Jackie Morris says, "When you work in the world of words, language, such things have power."

The celebration is of the words themselves and the natural world they evoke. With acrostic poems and hand-painted illustrations, Jackie's aspiration was for "a book for all ages, a book that reads aloud to delight the ear, with images that dance in the heart." Robert's goal: "To cast spells of language to summon the words back into common usage. A 'spelling' book in more ways than one."

This is about lost and found, about words, about the wild.

Published 5 October 2017 by Penguin Books Ltd. Hardcover £13.60

A new Literacy & Nature Resource Guide has been produced, as part of a suite of support materials, with links to The Lost Words education resources.

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LINTERN

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES BOULTER

Contested ground

David Lintern explores the background to the Trust's new Keep it Wild campaign, which seeks to strengthen planning protection for Scotland's Wild Land Areas

IN A TABLE with the title 'Spatial Frameworks', the 2014 Scottish Planning Policy document sets out three categories of land to guide the planning of onshore wind developments.

In group one – National Parks and National Scenic Areas – wind farms are expressly forbidden. Group three consists of land deemed favourable for this kind of development. Group two is the middle ground, and includes World Heritage Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves. It also includes 42 Wild Land Areas, mapped by Scottish Natural Heritage.

An historical aside, perhaps, but one that may be worth mentioning: this work follows the lead of mountaineer Bill Murray's survey work for the National Trust in 1962, called *Highland Landscape*, which laid the basis for the designation of National Scenic Areas.

Scottish Government inclusion of the Wild Land Areas Map in planning policy from 2014 onwards was a great success for the Trust and other advocates for the protection of our wild landscapes, but while it improved the chances for wild land, it didn't guarantee them.

There's a presumption against major development, but in cases where effects are deemed mitigated, consent may still be granted for large-scale wind farms. Group two is where the ambiguity lies – this is the contested ground.

Following Scottish Government refusals of wind turbine developments on wild land grounds on eight occasions, in October 2016 the Creag Riabhach development at Altnaharra was approved. This will see 22 turbines, each 125 metres high, either on or immediately adjacent to wild land. 'Area 37 includes Foinaven and Ben Hee and is rich in blanket bog and carbon-storing peatland. The new North Coast 500 (NC500) route runs around it, and the Sutherland Trail goes through it.

Has a new precedent been set? I met writer and broadcaster Cameron McNeish in a Kingussie café to discuss the point. "The changes in the planning from 2014 worked fairly well until Creag Riabhach. In PR terms, that's been a disaster because there was a feeling after 2014 that the Government had done the right thing in protecting the best of Scotland's landscapes.

"I'm in favour of renewables, but there are places where there are too many turbines, and places they should not be at all. I've been telling the Government for years we have to strike a balance. Upping the level of protection for wild land is the next logical step."

The John Muir Trust's new campaign is called 'Keep it Wild' and aims to bump protection for Wild Land

View from Ben Klibreck towards wind farm site at Creag Riabhach

Opposite: regeneration at Glen Feshie

Areas from group two to group one. Head of Policy at the Trust, Helen McDade, explains why: "The Scottish Government's pledge to 'safeguard wild land character' sounded great, but we still have to keep attending Public Local Inquiries and arguing the same points in the same way as we did before the Wild Land Areas advice was adopted as policy."

She stressed that the Trust does not object to small-scale, community-based energy schemes or industrial-scale schemes which don't impact on sensitive wild land landscapes. "Our concerns are the giant industrial-scale developments that fundamentally degrade some of Scotland's best landscapes and potentially damage the ecosystem, for instance where deep peatlands are severely impacted."

Helen points out that upgrading the level of protection for Wild Land Areas in the forthcoming Scottish Planning Bill would only ever apply to big energy projects. Under existing protection for National Scenic Areas, structures under 12 metres high or 0.5 hectares in area are not subject to an outright ban (though they may still require planning permission).

In the meantime, the Trust also wants to see more robust and consistent planning guidelines. Each application costs time, effort and money to assess, regardless of whether they are accepted or rejected. Councils, NGOs, the Scottish Government, public agencies and the energy companies themselves can become tied up for years in a dispute over a single development.

Staff time and expenses for the Trust alone can amount to £10,000 for each case, and should a planning professional or landscape architect need to be brought in, that figure can more than double. Yet without the expertise of organisations like the Trust, local people can struggle to present their case effectively.

The Limekiln case highlights some of the issues in broad strokes. In 2014, the Trust objected to 24 turbines on the edge of Wild Land Area 39 in Caithness, sited on the largest area of blanket bog in Europe. The objection was upheld on wild land grounds, and that should have been the end of it, but the developer came back… with more of the same.

Helen, who grew up in Caithness, explains: "When the new application was submitted in February 2017, it was virtually unchanged, and now we're going to another Inquiry, for the same site, with no significant difference in the planning, and we're all paying to do that all over again. And that's alongside the cost to the public purse. But approval would be a disaster for that area, which apart from anything else is just beginning to see the benefits of the NC500."

Thankfully, the Trust is not alone in questioning the veracity of some of these applications. Bob Reid's CV

→ continued

is a humbling list of activism and advocacy for the public good. A town and country planner by trade, he's advised the Government on land reform and the housing crisis, helped develop Scotland's acclaimed access rights and chaired the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (now Mountaineering Scotland).

He's now Development Director for Wildland Ltd, the property company owned by international fashion retailer Anders Holch Povlsen, who has helped transform Glenfeshie in the Cairngorms through reduction of deer and progressive land management. As part of a much bigger vision for the region as a whole, Wildland Ltd has taken out a Judicial Review against the Government decision to consent Creag Riabhach.

Povlsen wants to develop the area, but in a sustainable way, which includes assisting with a bid for World Heritage Status. "What's in it for him?" I asked Bob Reid.

"Anders is an environmentalist, and a pragmatist," says Bob. "He wants people to enjoy and value nature, but also wants to demonstrate that green tourism can work economically. And he admires those other famous clothing magnates – the late Doug Tompkins of The North Face and Yvon Chouinard of Patagonia – who have done so much good environmentally, and wants to make a similar kind of contribution."

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Tourism is a lifeline industry in the Scottish Highlands. According to new employment data from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, it supports 29,000 jobs (up 4,000 since 2010), which amounts to nearly one in ten of the region's entire population. The figure is not all full-time equivalents, but it excludes businesses under the VAT threshold, so the actual employment count is likely higher.

In contrast, onshore wind provides a mere 300 long-term full-time jobs, with another 500 that fluctuate depending on what's under construction.

Tourism also provides a more even spread of wealth and employment than the energy sector. It's a key part of modern crofting through provision of bed and breakfast accommodation and is already part of a more sustainable future for those trying to make a living in rural Scotland.

But the impact of the recent Highlands tourist boom is unevenly spread. It has created hotspots in the National Parks and National Scenic Areas. Skye, for example, has attracted press attention, with locals expressing concern over groaning island infrastructure struggling to cope with the summer influx.

Yet many Wild Land Areas further north are less frequented, and have the potential to capitalise on the general upsurge in tourism through nature-based development. Caithness and Sutherland – where most of the current wind farm applications are concentrated – is a long way from the Central Belt, but with the dualling of the A9 it will, within a decade, become more accessible.

Even now, the area is becoming a popular destination for visitors from both Europe and further afield due to the North Coast 500 route, named one of the top coastal road trips in the world and which Polvsen helped develop. Its recent global profile has generated some issues, from motorbikes through villages to congestion on single track roads in peak season, but Bob Reid sees more money going into the local economy, and believes the infrastructure will catch up.

In the meantime, his team is putting resources into the regeneration of Tongue as a much needed pit-stop on the north coast. The aim is to build local capacity, which for a town and country planner like Bob means constructing new, affordable homes and a care home, with more to come.

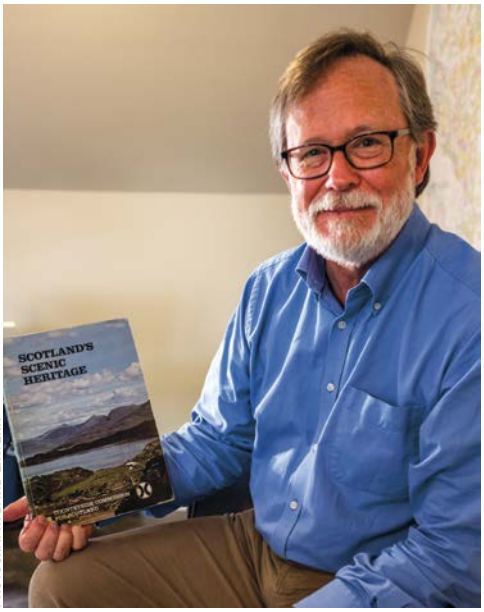
But the fly in the ointment is the continued targeting of the region by energy companies for large-scale development, attracted by the combination of windswept hillsides and cheap land.

A recent YouGov poll commissioned by the Trust found that 55 per cent of Scots are "less likely" to visit scenic areas in Scotland if they contained large-scale infrastructure, such as commercial wind farms, transmission pylons and super-quarries. The number jumps to 63 per cent for those who live in the Highlands.

Nature tourism may not be a panacea for all worldly ills, but for entrepreneurs like Povlsen and planners like Reid, it is the chief mechanism available in the region to influence social and environmental justice.

As Helen McDade says: "Community and wild land interest are sometimes cast in opposition to each other, but it's about taking into consideration all aspects of people's well-being and environment. Sometimes that's about where we live, and sometimes that's about where we can go to enjoy nature, and how that nature is getting on."

She believes that the Scottish Government could elevate the protected status of Wild Land Areas, promote them as places to visit, support the kind of landscape-scale regeneration that Povlsen has spearheaded at Glenfeshie, and see the wider rural economy reap the benefits.



PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LINTERN

"We want to develop the area in a sustainable way, which includes assisting with a bid for World Heritage Status"

Bob Reid (above)

PEOPLE AND LANDSCAPE

Finally, we may wish to consider the words of Highland historian Professor James Hunter. In a recent lecture at Edinburgh University, he reminds us of what Frank Fraser Darling called "a devastated terrain", drained of its ecological productiveness in the same way it was drained of people, the low impact of cattle and shieling replaced by sheep farming on an industrial scale.

Some of this land, he challenges, is now designated 'wild'. He then lays out his vision of a more positive future for the Highlands, a future in which a replenished environment would sit alongside a repeopled landscape.

Critical of blood sports as the dominant land use in the Highlands, Professor Hunter cautiously praises the impact that Povlsen and his local factor, Thomas MacDonell have had on Glenfeshie over the past decade – barely a blink of the eye in ecological time. His vision is to create a more liveable environment for both people and animals – places that people will want to both live near, and visit from further afield. "Rewilding and repeopling are not mutually exclusive", says James Hunter. They are both part of "restoring life and community".

We won't heal the wounds of the past with yet more industrial monocultures, nor by just maintaining the status quo. We must instead encourage the planners and policy makers to give our Wild Land, and the people who belong to it, a chance to reconcile and be renewed.

About the author
David Lintern is a Trust member, writer and photographer based in Kingussie

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LINTERN

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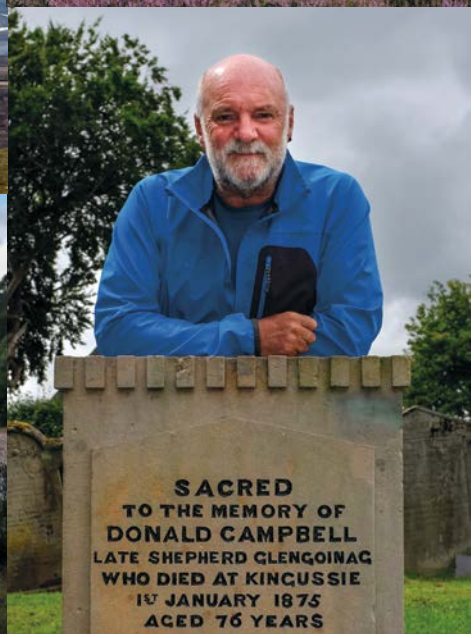


PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LINTERN

Clockwise from top: natural regeneration at Glen Feshie; layers, old and new; Cameron McNeish at the grave of the Bard of Badenoch; wild camping – the uplands are for people too; a visualisation of the Stronelairg site (now under construction)

In tune with nature

PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN LELLAND

As the Trust's Chief Executive settles into his new role, he talks to **Alan McCombes** about the ever-changing landscape of nature conservation

PHOTOGRAPH: PHIL FORMBY/WTML

ANDREW BACHELL has come a long way since attending a lecture in his home town of Southampton by David Bellamy, then a high profile conservationist with his own TV show. In conversation afterwards, Bellamy suggested that Andrew apply to Edinburgh University to study Ecological Science.

That was more than 40 years ago and, apart from a brief interlude during the recession of early 1980s, he has remained in Scotland ever since, steeping himself in the culture, landscapes and ecology of his adopted homeland.

When he's not working, he plays flute, whistle and fiddle and helps run a community music group, and regularly performs in a cèilidh band. He also sits on the Board of Directors of the Traditional Music Forum, a network of around 100 organisations and individuals dedicated to supporting and promoting traditional music across Scotland.

But it is his decades of experience in nature conservation that brought Andrew to the John Muir Trust as Chief Executive. "I've always admired the Trust," he says. "I've known it since its very early days, from its first property acquisition over in Knoydart when I was working in that part of Scotland."

GLEN FINGLAS

Back then, he was an Area Officer with the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland (which later became Scottish Natural Heritage). He stayed there for a for a year or two before being appointed as the first Scotland Director of the Woodland Trust. The organisation had acquired a number of woodlands north of the border, but only had two staff members. Under his leadership, the organisation took on further woodland, mainly in partnership with communities in and around urban areas such as the new towns of Glenrothes and Livingston.

But perhaps his greatest legacy from that time was the flagship Glen Finglas project. At that time, other conservation organisations were focusing mainly on the protection and expansion of native pine, so we looked around for a place we could develop broadleaf woodland on a grand scale. We were alerted that Glen Finglas in the Trossachs was to be put up for sale, and when we looked at it, we knew immediately that this was the place to do it. It's effectively three separate glens, which had a lot of patches of interesting woodland with the potential for much more on the large expanses of hill ground."

Glen Finglas is now part of the Great Trossachs Forest – the biggest designated National Nature Reserve in the country – and is much admired in conservation circles, including by nature writer Jim Crumley who recently wrote in the *Guardian*, "In the 20 years since Glen Finglas was removed from the grasp of commercial forestry, I have watched with wonder as it has transformed into burgeoning native woodland."

Andrew's love of nature goes back to childhood holidays spent in the wild places of Britain and Ireland with his family, including a fair bit of time on the spectacular Ardnamurchan peninsula, where he learned to love the solitude and became fascinated with bird life in particular. "When you're young, birds are a lot more exciting than plants," he says.

After he came to live in Scotland, he climbed Munros and regularly tackled challenging terrain on his own in the days before mobile phones and GPS. "I've gradually done less of that because life has filled up with raising a family and all sorts of other responsibilities and pursuits. So I'm not a rugged extreme sportsperson – just a walker."

Nor is he, in his own words, "a nature purist". His decades of experience at SNH – including in recent years as Director of Operations, then as Director of Policy and Advice – have taught him many things, not least the need to integrate nature, landscape and people. He regrets that, as a result of government policy over 60 years, conservation has become disconnected from forestry, agriculture and other productive economic processes.

"It's quite artificial to separate these out the way we have done, leading to one being pitched against the other. Had they been put together from day one, we wouldn't have today's cultural divisions between conservation and other land uses."

He would also like to see landscape and ecology more closely integrated in policy and legislation. "Most people get an interest

Clockwise: Glen Finglas; launching the Heart of Scotland Forest Partnership; at the Royal Highland Show with Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham

PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN LELLAND

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

"Wild Land Areas are not about excluding people. These places should create opportunities for communities to thrive and nature to flourish"

in nature by getting out in the countryside, where they can see it, they can hear it, they can smell it, they can feel it. That's more powerful than just learning about the science – although both are important. If we do things on a big enough scale – on a landscape scale – we start to change both the aesthetic and the ecology.

"When you get woodlands expanding across the hills, you're working with the grain of nature, improving the ecosystem while transforming the landscape for the better." For Andrew, that doesn't necessarily mean forcing nature backwards, and so prefers to talk about 'wilding' rather than 'rewilding'.

"We've left nature in a pretty impoverished state in many places, and some systems are very run-down, with soils and fertility damaged by endless grazing. So, we do have to try and undo some of that damage. But in the face of climate change, some of the things that we need to do would not be the same as what nature would have done."

PLANNING EXPERTISE

"We've got to help wild places become resilient to changes in the future. We know some of our tree species are under threat from windborne pathogens that will be brought in by warming climates, so given that's happening, we can't afford to be too purist. We need to put in the building blocks to reset systems so they will then do their own thing. It's not gardening – we need to talk about change on a landscape scale."

Andrew's deep understanding of Scotland's landscapes and ecosystems is fortified by his knowledge of the planning system. In the late 1970s, he did a post-graduate degree in town and country planning, which led to a job with the Nature Conservancy Council identifying a number of locations in Ayrshire that were later designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. "If it wasn't for people changing the land, there would be little need for nature conservation," he points out. "One of the biggest impacts on nature has been the spread of urbanisation, whether housing, roads or other infrastructure. Even a single house in the wrong place can have a severe impact on a woodland or wetland system.

"Planning knowledge was for me a way of influencing nature. If you want to protect nature, you need people who understand planning. That's why we have in the Trust a policy team that deals constantly with the planning system, because that's one area where we can wield significant influence."

In more recent years, in his role as Director of Policy and Advice for SNH, he was closely involved with the development of the Wild Land Areas map, which is now formally integrated into Scottish Government planning policy.

"For millennia, we have been part of the natural world," he says. "The idea behind Wild Land Areas is not to exclude people, but to allow for the experience of real wildness without intrusive land use or development. Such places should still create the opportunity for communities to thrive and for nature to flourish."

Andrew, who has also been Director of Conservation of the National Trust for Scotland, is relishing the challenge of coming back into the voluntary sector to lead an organisation with the stature of the John Muir Trust.

"The Trust is not huge, but it has a lot of influence as an organisation which carries out progressive land management, campaigns for change at national level and engages hundreds of thousands of people with nature through the John Muir Award. It has limited resources but it does its work in a professional and thorough way." He also pays tribute to the 11,000 plus members, who form the backbone of the Trust.

"I've always been impressed by the membership of the John Muir Trust. They didn't join to get free access to properties, or for any other personal benefit. They got involved because they believe in what the organisation stands for and because they support what it does. That is powerful."

About the author
Alan McCombes is the Trust's Communications Editor

Does Ben Nevis have a 'personality'?

Following a discussion at the Trust's recent AGM in Fort William, **Colin Robertson** of the UKELA Wild Law Special Interest Group explores whether mountains could have legal recognition

PHOTOGRAPHS: NATHAN BERRIE AND BLAIR FYFFE

IN 2017, the Wild Law Special Interest Group – which is part of the UK Environmental Law Association (UKELA) – held its annual meeting in the Glen Nevis Youth Hostel, near the start of the Ben Nevis footpath. After tramping the hills and valleys under benevolent weather conditions, we passed an enjoyable Saturday evening with the John Muir Trust learning about Ben Nevis first-hand from the Trust and the Nevis Landscape Partnership.

During the question and answer session that followed, the Wild Lawyers were asked about some legal matters, and in response, we asked a simple question: "Does Ben Nevis have a personality?"

The persons who work on the mountain answered the question eloquently, demonstrating their deep sympathy and understanding of the landscape they look after. Alison Austin, the Trust's Nevis Land Manager, talked of its fickle nature, its changing moods, its massive bulk, its steep corries, its rare plants, its hidden corners – all of which testified to its personality.

The mountain gives freely and generously, as walkers to the summit can attest – but the gifts come at a price for the careless, the inattentive or merely unfortunate, when accidents happen.

Yet there is another side that is rarely asked or thought about by the public: does the mountain have needs? Is it dependent on others? Those who live and work with the mountain know that it does. Many feet wear down the hillside, tread down on plants, create erosion, cause damage. Too many visitors can frighten away wild animals whose home is the mountain. Leaving litter can kill animals who think it food. These needs are recognised and actively addressed by the John Muir Trust and the Nevis Landscape Partnership.

The question of needs is one that agitates at the consciousness of Wild Lawyers, concerned with the damage we have wreaked on so many habitats. Nature in all its forms has needs, and the Wild Lawyers feel that these needs don't receive enough attention.

We read the statistics of declining species, loss of wilderness, diminishing biodiversity, climate change, acidification of the seas, flooding… and we ask ourselves whether this is all inevitable.

The Trust's Nevis Land Manager talked of its fickle nature, changing moods, massive bulk, steep corries, rare plants and hidden corners

The term 'Wild Law' derives from a book written by South African environmental attorney and author Cormac Cullinan entitled *Wild Law: A Manifesto for Earth Justice*. It describes an approach to law and governance that is holistic and based on principles of ecology, on the view that all life is interconnected and that human beings are part of a greater whole regulated by nature.

Current systems of law and governance place human beings at the centre, and nature is treated as a form of property for exploitation. The Wild Law view is that nature should not only be placed at the centre of law-making and governance, but it should also have enforceable rights and an identity in law.

A LEGAL PERSONALITY

The concept of legal personality is an old and well-established one in our legal systems. A physical person is a subject of law, with rights and duties, able to act and organise his or her affairs in ways that suit. Through the law we protect and defend our interests, and we are limited from encroaching on the rights of others.

Over the years, rights and duties attaching to physical persons have been extended to entities that do not have a physical existence as such. These are 'legal persons', and they are created by rules of law and given their own rights and duties.

Clockwise: High and mighty; chilling out; rock solid; hidden charms

A typical example is the public limited company, the 'plc'. Such companies can have bank accounts and undertake all sorts of activities. They are a separate entity from the persons who manage and operate them, and they have authorised representatives to act on their behalf.

However, if we turn to nature, we find that it has no 'money'. It has no 'personality' in law and so cannot go to court to defend its interests. Nature is something that is owned, leased, and used (or abused) by physical and legal persons. Are its interests consulted? Are its needs respected?

PRECEDENTS

Wild Lawyers talk about law as being 'anthropocentric' – i.e. human-centred. They talk about the 'anthroposphere'. We wonder what things might be like if nature was made a subject of law and given rights, like a corporate legal person.

Could the idea be practical? How might it work? There are recent precedents. In New Zealand, an agreement has been entered into to recognise the Whanganui River as a person in law, by means of a legislative act, the *Te Awa Tupua/ Whanganui River Claims Settlement Act 2017*. Other rivers have been granted legal rights, notably the Ganges and its tributary, the Yamuna. The idea is being explored by Wild Lawyers within the context of the UK, but it is too early to say whether or not it would be practicable.

So what about Ben Nevis as a legal person? Let us imagine a scenario. A legal document is created that recognises and gives voice to its personality and to defend its ecological health. It appoints a group of humans to represent its interests and act on its behalf as legal guardians, just as unborn children, very young children, sick and insane persons unable to manage their affairs may have persons to act for them.

This would imply new relationships between the owners, leaseholders and users of the mountain, and these would have to be negotiated, but it would mean a change in the balance of power in favour of the needs and interests of the mountain.

It is this shift in the balance which might open new possibilities for looking afresh at the whole of nature, and for rethinking how humans relate to their natural surroundings.

PEOPLE AND NATURE

But it is important to emphasise that the concept of legal personality for an ecosystem must also include within it the existence and lives of human beings who have contributed so actively to it in the past. For we humans are also part of 'wildness'.

The concept of 'legal personality' for nature thus reflects 'evolution' rather than 'revolution', providing a tool with which we can fine-tune a harmonious relationship with nature, working with, and involving, local communities.

So, these are some of the things that we Wild Lawyers think and talk about at our weekend meetings. We are not dogmatic, deterministic or fanatic, despite the name we give ourselves. We are searching for new paths, founded in ecological principles. We feel that basic assumptions and attitudes throughout our society need to be rethought. We are searching for a new and more sustainable relationship with nature expressed through law.

Our meeting with members of the John Muir Trust and the Nevis Landscape Partnership helped us to move our thinking a notch further on. We will continue to collaborate and exchange ideas. We thank both organisations for a wonderful evening and for the friendship and sympathy of a shared cause.

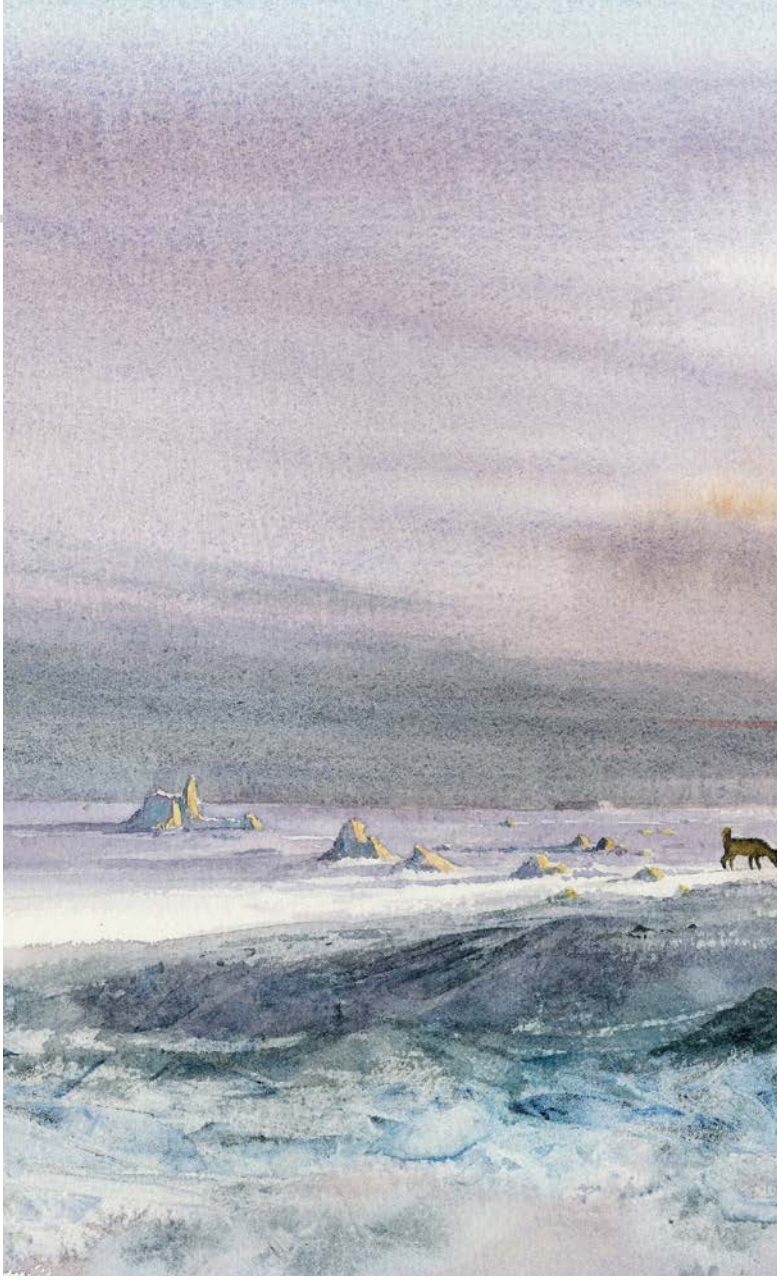
And lastly, because this report is after all written by a lawyer, it is necessary to add the requisite clause of disclaimer that this article is purely personal and engages the liability of no one other than its author!

● *This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in the UKELA E-Law newsletter (ukela.org/elaw-newsletter)*

About the author
Colin Robertson is a Scottish solicitor by origin and worked for many years in government and in EU institutions as lawyer and linguist. He has authored a book on multilingual law and is now an expert with the UN Harmony with Nature Programme.
harmonywithnatureun.org

Extreme watercolours

Artist and long-term supporter of the Trust **David Bellamy** shares some personal memories of sketching in sub-zero conditions in Greenland – and occasionally in the hell of an Arctic storm



THE SLEDGES were heavily laden for a week's expedition into the icy vastness to the north of Scoresbysund. We slid serenely over deep snow, gradually climbing the shallow slopes of Kalkdalen, a route through the mountains to bring us onto the East Coast of Greenland. Then came a rapid descent. As I looked back at Torben's sledge, the scene fired me up.

With my sketching gear ready for quick action I began working quickly in pencil, trying to capture the wild movement of the dogs and the vague outline of sledge and driver beyond a great flurry of snow. Gripping the sides of the sledge with both legs, I twisted round to sketch, excited by the scene. My sledge took a severe swerve to the left and I shot off, violently crashing into a hard snow-bank then bouncing back onto the sledge, pencil and sketchbook still in my hand as though nothing had happened. *Huskies in Full Cry* is the resulting painting.

This was one of my early trips to the High Arctic with my Danish friend, Torben Sorensen, and our sledges were driven by two Inuit hunters, Isak and Jens. Neither spoke a word of English, so we communicated via Torben's Danish. When we stopped for a break I leapt off the sledge, eager to cross to a spot to sketch the huge glistening ice features of a glacier, but I simply floundered around in the deep snow and had to give it up.

This drove home to me how incredible these dogs are when they can not only get through this soft white stuff with ease, but haul a massive expedition sledge along at the same time. They occasionally display sadistic tendencies, when they seem to deliberately aim the sledge towards a nasty-looking rock jutting out of snow as smooth as a billiard table.

DARK ABYSS

There were times too when we slid across hard-packed snow at a steep angle across our line of advance when an evil-looking crack in the ice, large enough to swallow the sledge and its contents, would appear just below. At this point, the dogs would have to maintain speed to prevent us from sliding sideways into that dark abyss. These were extremely tense moments. Had the worst happened, my only recourse would have been to hurl myself off the sledge and try to dig my 4B pencil into the snow to stop me sliding into oblivion.

Our objective was the hunters' hut at Kap Hoegh, situated on a short isthmus between a small peak and the magnificent Heywood Bjerge mountains – a truly remote spot, open to the full force of the Arctic northerlies that stream down the coast. You have to melt snow for any water you need. Knud Rasmussen, the great Greenlandic explorer, swore by a vigorous rub-down with walrus blubber as an alternative to a proper wash.

One evening, I ventured out of the hut to sketch some ice formations. To capture the subtle nuances, it was vital to sketch in colour but I struggled to cope as the washes instantly froze – even though I had added copious amounts of gin to the painting water.

The wind increased, blasting spindrift across the isthmus. Watercolour became hopeless as the brushes instantly turned to solid ice-spears. I scratched and scored across the sketch to try to capture the sense of the violent wind, then began working watercolour pencils into the drawing. Suddenly the temperature took a deep plunge, making me gasp, my face stinging to the blast of a thousand ice needles, while the spindrift buried my scattered sketching equipment. I abandoned the sketching, raced across to the hut and dived into the warmth.

Still, not only did I get the sketch I wanted, but the storm had conspired to stop me at the right time – one of the problems often confounding the artist is to know when to stop, and not overdo the sketch or painting – and this time nature did it for me.

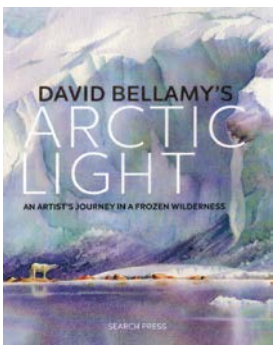
Other days brought brilliant sunshine when it became a pleasure to work in watercolour so long as I was well cocooned in my Arctic down jacket, two or three hats, snow goggles and various combinations of gloves which I continually took on and off my right (painting) hand to keep working.

Often while working in this stunning environment, I would stop sketching and gaze around in awe at the beauty of such raw, unspoilt wildscapes, revelling in the intense silence and vast emptiness of Arctic scenery.

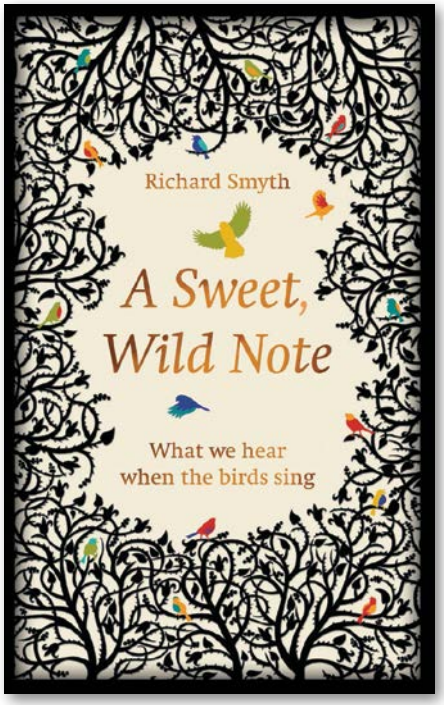
You cannot help but compare it with your homeland where so much glorious natural beauty is being trashed for the sake of 'progress' – and wonder how much longer can the Arctic remain such an outstanding wilderness.

About the author
David Bellamy is a watercolour artist and author who specialises in painting mountain, Arctic and desert scenery. The illustrations here are from his latest book *Arctic Light*, available from **davidbellamy.co.uk**. Share your own wild moments at **johnmuirtrust.org/wild-moments**

"To capture the subtle nuances, it was vital to sketch in colour, but I struggled to cope as the washes instantly froze, even though I had added copious amounts of gin to the painting water"



David Bellamy and some of his paintings from one of the Earth's wildest places



A Sweet Wild Note: What We Hear When the Birds Sing by Richard Smyth

Liz Auty is enchanted by a new book that hits the high notes with its entertaining and informative exploration of nature's very own sound show

AS SOMEONE who only recently opened my ears to bird song, and now strives to identify the singers, I really connected with Richard Smyth's journey along the same path.

This is a beautifully written study, which explores our relationship with bird song in our culture, literature and music.

Even if we have never studied it deeply, bird song evokes an emotional response in most of us for one reason or another. Yet the author also reminds us that our impact on the natural world ultimately risks silencing the music of the skies, meadows and trees.

I learned some new and interesting stories from reading a book that has inspired me to listen more.

Personally, I have learnt the calls and songs of birds gradually, with help from kind mentors. These range from the 'teacher teacher' call of the great tit to the collared dove that sometimes sounds as though it's calling my own name.

I had never heard the chaffinch call compared to the fast bowler in cricket running up to the crease and delivering the ball – but what a vivid and memorable description, originally noted by William Warde Fowler.

The author points out how tied up with season and place our experience of bird song is. It is also frequently used to set scenes and moods in films and TV dramas – and to signal menace through its absence.

One of Richard Smyth's favourite birds is the redwing – a winter visitor in this country from Scandinavia, which means we never hear its song. I was fortunate enough to hear it sing in Norway in the month of May a few years ago.

At the time, I was convinced the song was from a bird that didn't occur in Scotland, but was then delighted to discover the owner of the call. The song heard in the snowy Norwegian forest early that morning is a long-lasting memory from the trip.

From *A Sweet Wild Note* I learned how we have tried to replicate bird song in music, or incorporated it into recordings. The first BBC broadcast of a nightingale was, apparently, from a Surrey garden in 1926 when Beatrice Harrison played her cello to a live audience – and the nightingale replied. The 'Nightingale Lady' became an overnight sensation.

The saddest part of Richard Smyth's story was of the caged song birds which were not only held captive, but pitted against each other in singing contests so their owners could make money betting on the winner. The best performances were believed to come from blind birds – and because of this, creatures were deliberately blinded.

BAROMETER OF DAMAGE

The association of canaries and coal mines is more familiar. The birds, highly susceptible to carbon monoxide, were taken down the pits to detect poisonous gas. The death of a canary warned the miners to make their escape.

Ultimately, the loss of song birds is an early warning for us, a barometer of the damage we are inflicting on nature.

One thing their song often gives us is hope. For me, the songs and calls of the robin are a comfort and a friend: almost everywhere I go – garden, lowland, upland – there seems to be a sparky robin as part of the soundscape.

This book is a great read that will help you appreciate more fully nature's beautiful sound track.

£14.99
Elliott and Thomson
eandtbooks.com

The reviewer
Liz Auty is the Trust's Schiehallion Land Manager

Others we like

Shorebirds in Action: An Introduction to Waders and their Behaviour, **Richard Chandler**
Illustrated with 400 great photos covering 180 species, this book tells you all you need to know about shorebirds – their feeding, breeding, flocking, roosting, migration, physiological adaptations, avoidance of predators, and more.
£21.95 (softback), **whittlespublishing.com**

The Wilder Muir: The Curious Nature of John Muir, **Bonnie Gisel**
Written by an environmental historian who is also the long-standing curator of the Yosemite Conservation Center, Gisel shares 23 stories from Muir's vast collection of published and unpublished works, taking us deep into some of the wildest and most remote places of North America.
£7.99 (Amazon), **yosemiteconservancy.org**

In the Cairngorms, **Nan Shepherd**
The Living Mountain is today recognised as one of the finest works of mountain literature ever written.
Now her collection of 46 poems is back in print

Poacher's Pilgrimage: An Island Journey by Alastair McIntosh

Toby Clark finds inspiration in the insight and humanity of a Hebridean writer, activist and academic with a love of nature and wild places

ALASTAIR MCINTOSH, who spent his formative years growing up in Leurbost on the Isle of Lewis, is now recognised as one of Scotland's leading land activists – involved with the community buy-out of the Isle of Eigg and successfully campaigning against the Harris superquarry in Lingerbay.

As a writer, his best-known work is perhaps his 2001 book *Soil and Soul: People Versus Corporate Power*. Since then, he has published his collected poetry, *Love and Revolution* (2006), and *Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition* (2008).

He currently lives in the Glasgow inner-city district of Govan where he helped set up the GalGael Trust – a group that aims to involve the community in traditional boat building and restoration with the objective of helping people find skills, purpose and inspiration.

In his most recent book, *Poacher's Pilgrimage*, Alastair describes a return to the island of his childhood, and the 60-mile walk he took in 2009 from the far south of Harris to the northern shores of Lewis.

Although concerned with geography and terrain, it is much more than a travel book. Challenged through recent work on war and peace, which involved delivering guest lectures at military training institutions across Europe, the peace-loving Quaker uses the pull of a pilgrimage to refuel his hope for humanity.

"There is something stirring in a lot of us that feels the urge to place that compass on the map, to let its needle swing – the wider and the wilder, the better," he writes.

His profound love for the island shines through in evocative descriptions.

"More than anything today, I've moved into a world of birds. The air's alive with eider, mallard, cormorant, guillemot and fulmar. The wind, that has returned since last night's calm, is singing with the mew of curlews and the long drawn-out pee-wit of lapwings."

Alastair uses his journey to investigate not just nature, but the churches, stones and healing wells that dot the islands. He considers how religion, folklore and geology have shaped our history, politics, science, spirituality and imagination. He avoids overly pious or preaching tones, preferring instead observational humour, which is often self-deprecating.

Not all readers will find every page of *Poacher's Pilgrimage* illuminating, but there is something here for everyone.

BRIDGING DIVIDES

Alastair mentions the John Muir Trust in a positive light through an encounter with a fisherman now involved with the North Harris Trust – whose community buy-out was part-funded by the John Muir Trust. The recorded dialogue between Alastair and the fisherman provides a fascinating glimpse into a throw-back feudal world of pride, permits and poaching.

Many such conversations, experiences, and reflections burst from *Poacher's Pilgrimage,* like the individual flutes of a scallop shell radiating from its hinge.

Alastair McIntosh has been described to me as a polymath. He has an art for engaging with and listening to differing – even opposing – points of view, and the talent to bring together poetry, prose and pragmatism to bridge divides.

In *Poacher's Pilgrimage* Alastair speaks out for non-violence, social justice and our environment – and more power to him and his journey.

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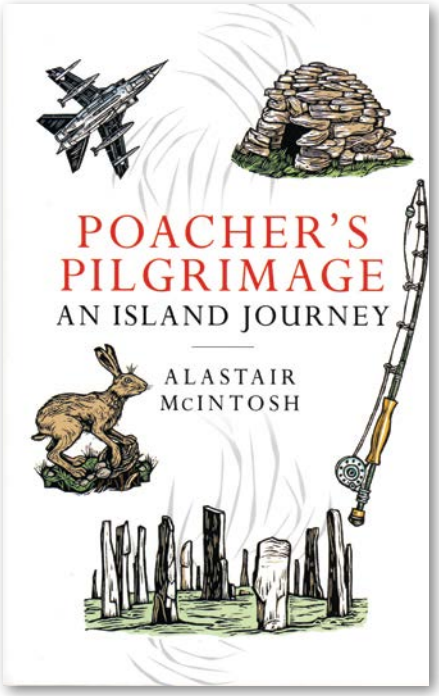
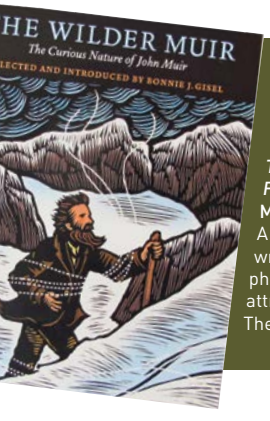


The reviewer
Toby Clark is the Trust's John Muir Award Scotland Manager



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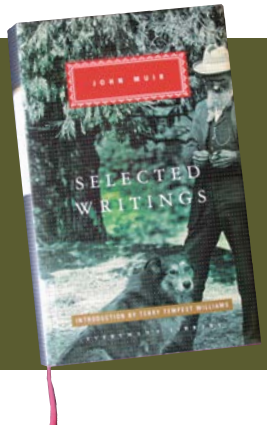

Linda Cracknell

Award-winning novelist, dramatist and creative non-fiction writer Linda Cracknell recently helped a group of Edinburgh school students gain their John Muir Awards. **Kevin Lelland** spoke to her about the inspiration she draws from nature and landscape

Tell us a little about how you discovered a feeling for wild places?
When I was 17, with my brother's help, I put a tent on the back of a bicycle, and cycled away from home for a week.

In memory, it rained most of the time, I fended off earwigs who colonised the tent and inappropriate behaviour by a youth hostel warden, and had at least one bicycle breakdown. But I remember being thrilled by my own independence, and in a very direct communion with the places I passed through, because I was doing it alone, 'under my own steam.'

I learned to rely on my own resources, that most problems could be overcome and that, mostly, there was no need to distrust people or the natural environment.

As writer, what is your relationship with contemplation in the outdoors?
When asked what writers ought to do, the great writer, photographer and activist Susan Sontag, said: 'Love words, agonise over sentences. And pay attention to the world.' I often repeat this, both to myself and to others. Writers are curious; they are 'explorers' in whatever is their field, and their antennae can never be switched off.

My creativity and my impulse to write is increasingly grounded in exploration of places. The narrative in my novel *Call of the Undertow* arose from repeated walks and observations in the Dunnet Bay area of Caithness as well as learning of the underpinning history and folklore.

With each foray I made along the deserted miles of beach, watching gannets dive, followed in parallel by curious grey seals, new ideas for the story sprang up from its setting and I came to more fully understand my characters.

Ten years ago or so I decided to turn the method of my writing into the subject matter. I've always walked a lot, and loved mountain terrain and long journeys on foot. I identified a number of walks which had an element of personal, collective or biographical memory and then wrote a series of narrative accounts. This became the book, *Doubling Back: Ten paths trodden in memory*, published in 2014.

Any examples of the impact your writing has had on others?
My writing includes plays and short stories for BBC Radio and it's truly wonderful when people contact me to tell me they connected with something I've written; that feels like 'job done'. However, my most profound experience was much more personal.

A farmer close to where I live in Highland Perthshire was ill. I didn't know him very well but I often saw him on my regular walks and exchanged greetings and news. He seemed a living waymark in the landscape and in time. I wrote a poem about/for him, gave it to his wife and heard no more about it until I learned that he had died and had asked that the poem be read at his funeral. It was far more powerful than the best book review.

Do you think or feel differently when you're out in the wild?
During a mostly solo walk between my home in Perthshire and the Isle of Skye following an old drovers' route, I observed how wild and vivid my imagination became with the synthesis of landscape, movement, personal challenge (i.e. weather) and time. I think we recover a more primal and perhaps a more playful version of ourselves in such situations where we are reliant on our natural environment more than normal, living by intuition or different rhythms.

What do you do when you're not writing or walking?
I am a freelance teacher of creative writing. I travel quite a bit with my work and in recent years have led a travel and writing workshop to a remote place in the Moroccan Sahara. I also volunteer as an editor on a magazine for Scottish PEN – part of an international writers' organisation that promotes freedom of speech and liberty for writers. I also read as much as possible, grow vegetables and have started exploring my seafaring ancestry in North Devon.

● Linda's two most recent books are *Call of the Undertow*, a novel set in coastal Caithness, and *Doubling Back: Ten Paths Trodden in Memory*, a non-fiction account of walking in former footsteps. She writes for the WalkHighlands website and will be running a 'Walking and Writing' workshop in Pitlochry on Saturday, 18 November 2017.

Find out more at:
lindacracknell.com

About the interviewer
Kevin Lelland is the Trust's Head of Membership and Communications

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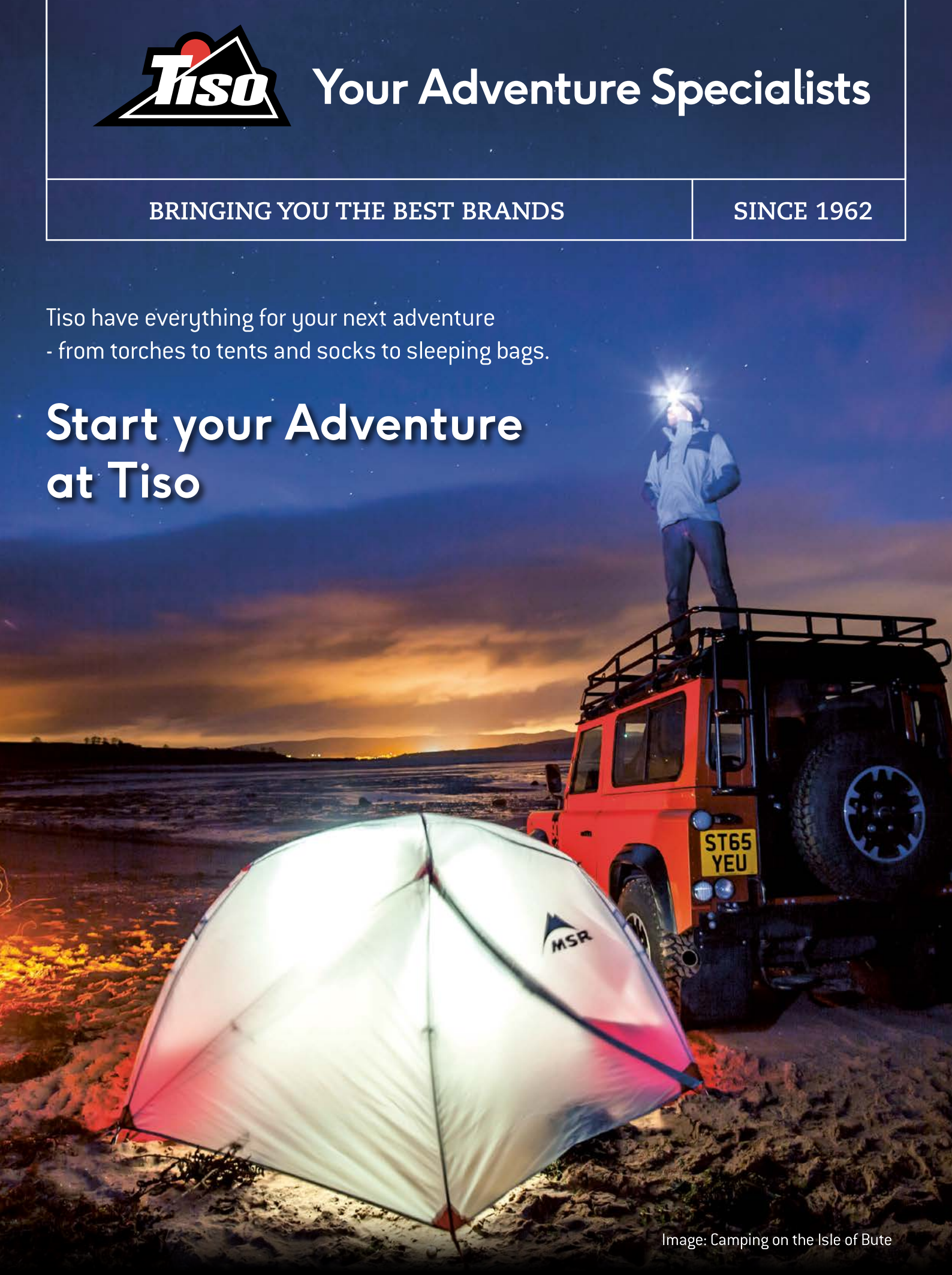

Image: Camping on the Isle of Bute

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