JOHN MUIR TRUST

JOURNAL

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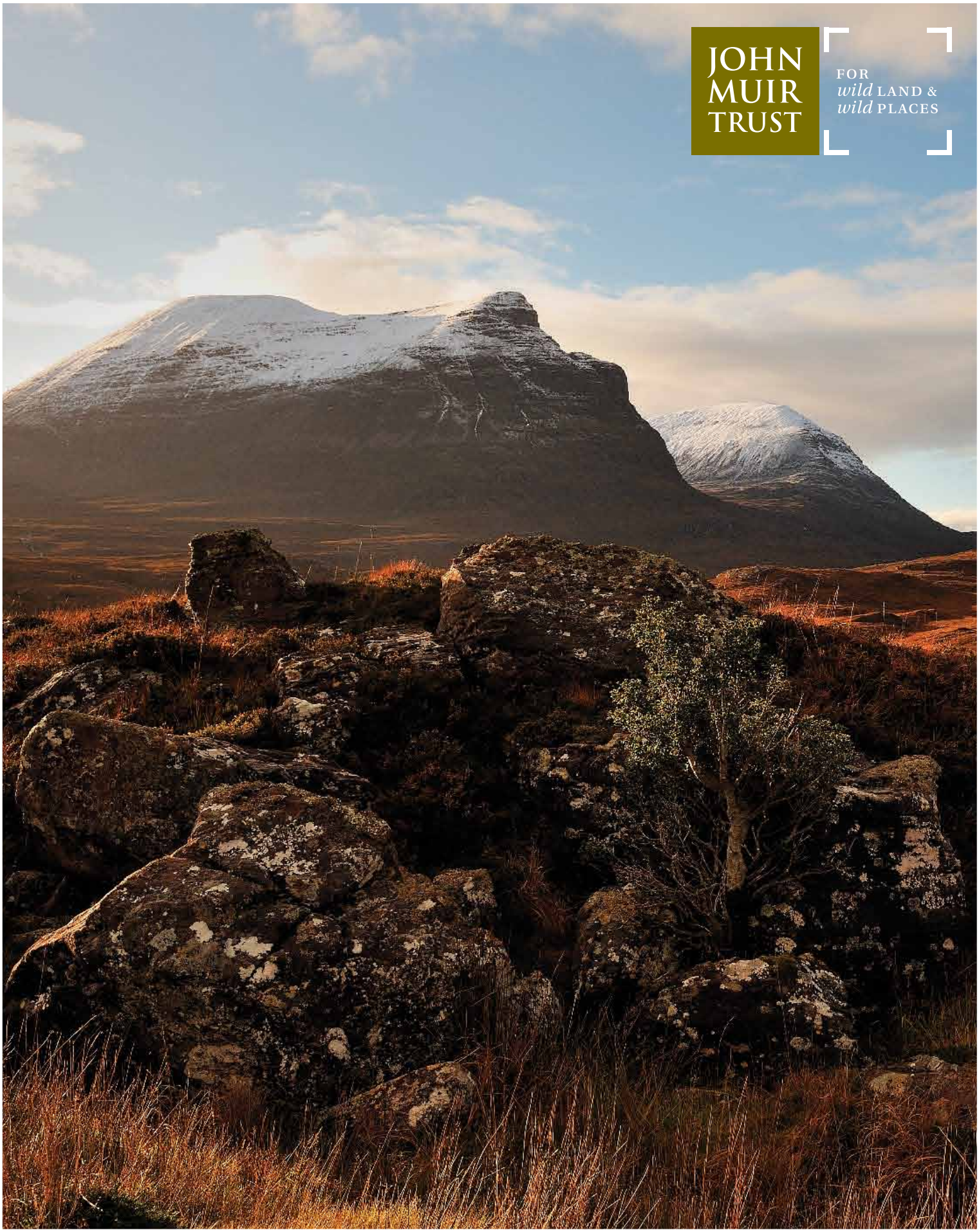

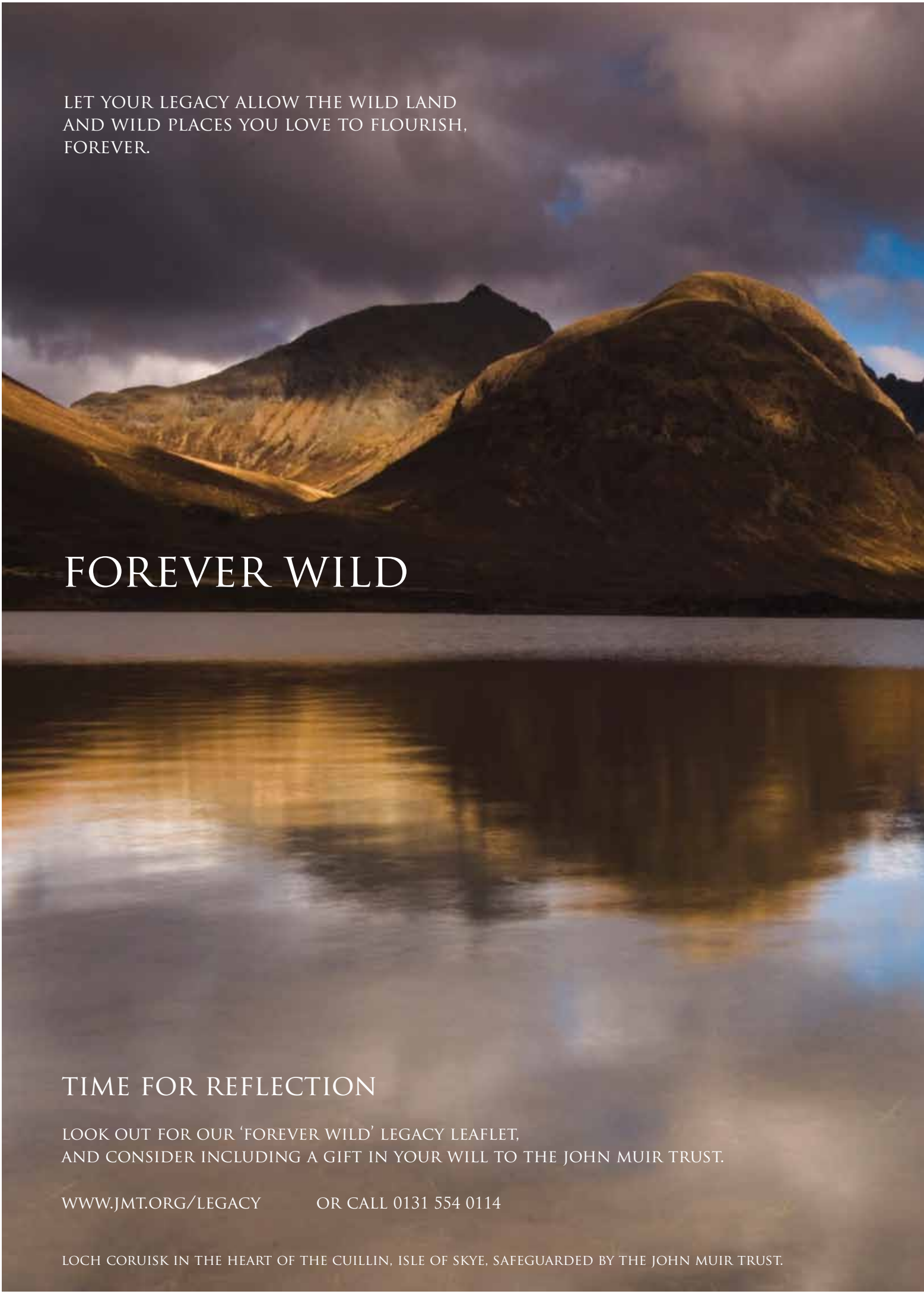
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PHOTOGRAPHER: KEITH BRAME

Once again the John Muir Trust Journal sets out to describe how the Trust continues to conserve, campaign and inspire as it works to ensure that wild land is protected and wild places valued. In this edition we describe how the Trust is taking an ecosystem approach to managing the estates in its care and how it is addressing the new pressures on our precious scenic assets at a time of economic recession.

The Trust already has strong links with the Sierra Club in North America and we report on the audacious campaign in California to undam the Hetch Hetchy valley. In our next edition we will develop the international perspective and focus on the place of the John Muir Trust and its members in the world-wide conservation movement.

Mike Brown, Editor

FRONT COVER

The magnificent Quinag (Cuineag) in the wilds of Assynt stands proud with its imposing buttresses of Torridonian sandstone. The John Muir Trust safeguards the ecosystems of Quinag, from the rocks, lichens and wildlife, to the remnants of ancient woodland scattered across the northern side of the mountain. Photographer: Iain Brownlie Roy

Foreword from the Chief Executive

Growing membership strengthens Trust's potential to defend wild land in a changing world.

Welcome to all our members, old and new, and a particularly warm welcome to the Brickell family from Perthshire who became our 10,000th member in June, receiving a special membership certificate from our Patron, the Prince of Wales.

It is clear, speaking to Andrew Brickell, why he joined the John Muir Trust. As a very keen hillwalker he spends a lot of his free time in wild places and sees the Trust as an effective organisation, protecting and promoting the kinds of natural, cultural and spiritual values he enjoys and wants his children to enjoy in the future. Our Award programme is so successful because it recognises this kind of personal relationship that people can have with wild places and the positive benefits that this brings to their lives.

As our organisation grows and all of us spend more time in the virtual world there is a danger that we can start to lose touch with our members. A growing membership is also likely to bring with it a broader range of views, enriching debate but making consensus-building more challenging. I was absolutely delighted, therefore, to meet over 170 members at our AGM in Birnam this year where we provided a range of interesting discussions, entertaining talks and stimulating excursions. The feedback we received was very positive and I hope our next AGM and Members' Gathering in Aviemore will be even more successful. I received a clear message to keep listening to the members and to provide as many opportunities as possible to engage you in our thinking and work.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of the Journal. We have tried to cover a diversity of subjects to illustrate the full extent of our activities. These range from our views on wild land management to an exploration of some of the current social and economic impacts on wild land. If the imminent threats to our precious wild places depress you, you can always find inspiration in the words and pictures of our creative contributors.

I am discovering that inspiration is never far away in the John Muir Trust. I was privileged to spend some time with Cathel Morrison, our manager at the Sandwood estate - in glorious weather, I should add, with no midges. My children swam in the sea then trudged back tired but elated by the experience. All the people I met on the track, in the car park and the hotel that evening had been touched by the beauty and grandeur they had seen. I find inspiration not only in the place but also in the positive effect that it has on people's lives.

Enjoy the Journal, and please let us know your thoughts. Be inspired!

Stuart Brooks

Top: Stuart Brooks, left, with the Trust's Conservation Manager at Sandwood, Cathel Morrison.

Above: Archie, Leesa, Cameron and Andrew Brickell. The family became the Trust's 10,000th member when it joined this year.

Schiehallion. Photographer: Keith Brame

New focus on wild land research

A new Wild Land Research Institute is being officially launched at the University of Leeds this October.

The Institute's research will focus on improving thinking on wild land and natural processes, create a new framework for understanding and valuing natural and semi-natural environments, and seek to enhance our relationship with wild nature.

Subjects under investigation by the Institute include:

- the intrinsic value of wild land;
- perceptions of wild land, its cultural and ecological components;
- the identifying and valuing of ecosystem goods and services from wild lands.

Other research topics will include strategies for 're-wilding' landscapes and the management of protected areas.

The Institute is currently running a number of online surveys including 'Where is wild Scotland?' which is gathering individual views to determine the range of opinions on what constitutes wild land in Scotland. To participate visit www.ccg.leeds.ac.uk/projects/wild-scotland/

Further information:

→ **www.wildlandresearch.org**

John Muir documentary

A film is currently going into production telling the story of John Muir's work in America and his achievement as writer and activist in campaigning for wild places.

John Muir in the New World will be a 90-minute documentary biography directed by Leslie Clark. The programme will be produced by Global Village Media and broadcast in the United States by the Emmy award-winning American Masters series on PBS.

Outward Bound strengthens John Muir Award link

Outward Bound participants work for their John Muir Award. Photographer: Keith Brame

The Outward Bound Trust has committed a member of its staff to co-ordinate its links with the John Muir Award at a national level after eight years of joint working between the two organisations in Wales, Scotland and Cumbria. Nick Barrett, Outward Bound's Chief Executive, says this is the best way of taking forward one of his organisation's key strategic directions: "We want to inspire concern and raise awareness about the natural environment, particularly the beautiful and fragile environment in which we operate."

The reinforcement of the partnership has been welcomed by Sir Chris Bonington, an Outward Bound Trustee. "I've long been a supporter of both organisations and am delighted to see them working closely together and playing to each other's strengths."

Adding up the impact of the John Muir Award

A UK-wide review exercise was carried out during April and May 2009 to capture a snapshot of the extent of the activity being carried out by groups and individuals to meet the Conserve challenge in the John Muir Award. As part of achieving their John Muir Award, participants took responsibility for wild places across the United Kingdom from Devon to Aberdeenshire, Pembrokeshire to Dunbar.

How many were involved?

- **140** groups completed their John Muir Awards in April and May 2009 and responded to the survey.
- **54** of these were working with participants from socially excluded backgrounds. (See feature on Page 22.)
- A total of **3055** Award participants were involved in 'putting something back'.
- Over **32,000** hours of conservation activity was carried out - almost four years of continuous activity. This is valued at **£250,000** at National Lottery approved rates.

What was the impact?

- **6300m²** of ponds created or maintained - the size of one football pitch - and **1** management plan drawn up for a lake.
- **8446m²** of wild plants and shrubs maintained.
- **70m²** of wild flower meadows maintained; **10m²** created from scratch.
- **5038m** of footpaths maintained - equivalent to climbing Ben Nevis four times.
- **580m** of boundaries maintained, including dry stone walls, willow hurdles and fencing.
- **989m** of hedging created by 9 groups.
- **103** habitats for wildlife made, including homes for bats, small mammals, goosanders, hedgehogs, barn owls, harvest mice, dragonflies, otters and dormice.
- **394** insect homes made.
- Nearly **800m²** of invasive species cleared.
- **601** black bin liners of litter collected and disposed of.
- **51** groups actively engaged with the theme of biodiversity.
- **6** groups directly contributed to Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- **9** groups got involved with biological recording (surveys).
- **39** groups tackled outdoor access issues while enjoying the outdoors (**10** adopted Leave No Trace principles).
- **3** groups got involved in speaking up for wild places through campaigns.
- **24** groups reduced, reused or recycled and **2** groups ran an energy audit.
- **6** groups adopted green travel policies, **2** groups considered food miles and **2** groups grew their own food.

Fighting wildlife crime

One day last winter a neighbour reported a grisly find while out walking her dog. Having stumbled across a pile of heads, hooves and innards - the grallochs of some roe deer - she wondered if there had been foul play. I remembered loud shots a couple of nights earlier. I recommended calling the police as they might be building up a case against poachers in our area. I didn't know at the time that my neighbour's discovery may have been part of a much bigger picture, showing an increase in poaching.

The latest figures from the UK's National Wild Life Crime Unit (NWCU) have revealed that the greatest threat to wild life across Scotland is poaching and hare coursing. In the first half of 2009 they accounted for one third of all incidents reported to the NWCU from Scottish police forces. That compares with around a quarter for the same period in 2008. The NWCU say the apparent rise may be due to better recording and raised awareness.

The unit, based in North Berwick, was formed at the end of 2006 while the Partnership for Action Against Wild Life Crime (PAW), with which I'm involved, was recently restructured and celebrates its first anniversary this autumn. Is 'celebrate' the right word? The headlines so far this year suggest no decrease in some other areas of wild life crime, like the illegal poisoning of birds of prey.

Members of the Partnership, from land managers to conservation groups, have joined forces to condemn and root out the persecutors – but it's not easy. Wild life crime often takes place in remote areas – a poisoned golden eagle may only be stumbled on by chance. That's where John Muir Trust members and others who care about the countryside can be ready to use their eyes and ears and play their part.

Unfortunately, we don't always know what to look for or what to do about it. PAW Scotland is currently setting up a website which will carry information, advice and details of people to contact.

Criminals sometimes pride themselves on expert knowledge of wild life and their ability to outwit the authorities. But members of PAW Scotland are equally determined to find their prey.

Louise Batchelor
Executive Member, PAW Scotland

A website for school projects on wild life crime can be found at

→ **www.snh.org.uk/wildlifecrimeschools/index.asp**

Crime victim: an illegally killed buzzard. Photographer: Peter Cairns

'Highland Tiger' campaign aims to save the wild cat

Wild cat in winter – 'as rare as a Bengal tiger'. Photographer: Peter Cairns

The Scottish wild cat has become extremely rare - there could be as few as 400 left in the wild. This makes the wild cat one of Britain's most endangered species. It is much rarer than the Bengal tiger. Now a group of organisations has combined to save it from extinction in one of its major habitats, the Cairngorms.

The wild cat is Britain's only remaining native feline. As a predator, it plays a crucial role in our ecosystems. For centuries it has suffered habitat loss, been hunted for fur and killed as vermin. Today it is more threatened than ever. Disease and vehicle collisions take their toll and it interbreeds with domestic cats, diluting its genetic purity.

The Cairngorms Wild Cat Project is a partnership between the Cairngorms National Park Authority, Forestry Commission Scotland, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Scottish Gamekeepers Association and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Using an awareness-raising campaign branded 'Highland Tiger', the Project seeks to encourage responsible domestic cat ownership (ie increased neutering and vaccination) and works with land managers to ensure that predator control is wild cat-friendly and that the wild cat population and the extent of both hybridisation and disease are monitored.

→ **www.highlandtiger.com**

Rare moth spotted at Strathaird after 30 years

A rare argent and sable moth has been sighted on the Trust's Strathaird estate by Wild Land Ranger Lester Standen. The last sighting of the species in the area was recorded before 1980. The argent and sable moth is classified as 'Nationally Scarce'. It breeds in birch woodland, open moorland and bogs.

"Seeing scarce species like these moths shows you how important it is to cut down on grazing in sensitive areas," says Lester.

Liz Auty, the Trust's Biodiversity Officer, has appealed for people in the area to look out for other specimens: "This species is probably under-recorded so we would like to hear of any other sightings".

Argent and sable moth.
Photo: Butterfly Conservation

■ Strathaird woodland flourishes out of the Sitka's shade – page 12.

Sandwood's distinguished resident: the Great Yellow Bumblebee

The Great Yellow Bumblebee. Photographer: Bob Dawson/Bumblebee Conservation Trust

One hundred years ago the Great Yellow Bumblebee was distributed over all of Britain and Ireland: today it is arguably Britain's rarest bumblebee, restricted to the north and west of Scotland. The westernmost of the mainland outposts is the John Muir Trust's Sandwood estate.

Surveys by bumblebee expert Murdo Macdonald in 2006 suggested a reasonable population of the Great Yellow Bumblebee, with six foraging queens seen at Polin and two at Oldshoremore. In 2009 Bob Dawson of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust revisited these areas and Sandwood to assess the floral diversity of the sites and establish whether Great Yellow Bumblebees were still present.

The Great Yellow Bumblebee, along with the Moss Carder Bee, is a Biodiversity Action Plan species, contributing to biodiversity priorities at Sandwood. The Great Yellow Bumblebee is also one of the species targeted for further action by Scottish Natural Heritage under the Species Action Framework. Information on their numbers is also relevant to applications for management funding through the Scottish Rural Development Programme.

As with all bumblebees, only the new queens reared in summer hibernate to emerge the following spring when they quickly need to restore body condition, prime the reproductive machinery and search for a suitable underground nest site. The availability of a range of useful flowers, providing flowering continuity from June to August, makes sites like Polin and Oldshoremore special.

Bumblebees, with their annual life cycle, are subject to annual changes in the weather, either directly, through prolonged periods of wet and wild weather, or indirectly, where dry periods in spring may affect the growth of the machair flower community on which they depend. A visit in late June 2009 was made during gloriously warm weather with mostly light winds. These should have been excellent conditions to see bumblebees and many were indeed present, but it took many hours of searching to find a queen Great Yellow Bumblebee at Oldshoremore. None was seen at Polin. Has the Great Yellow Bumblebee population crashed at Sandwood, and could it recover? Numbers were again low in early August but more encouraging was a fresh queen caught at Polin, indicating a successful nest - queens are the recruitment for next year.

Does this decline reflect natural fluctuation or long-term decline? Only time will tell, with regular recording of this species, which is where the role of John Muir Trust rangers and volunteers is vital.

Bob Dawson

→ **www.bumblebeeconservation.org**

Upland bird spotters wanted

A partnership of ornithological groups is asking hillwalkers and others who spend time in the Scottish mountains to help with a bird recording project.

BTO Scotland and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club have produced a leaflet, as part of the Building Bird Monitoring in Scotland project, explaining how to use BirdTrack, a simple, online bird recording scheme developed through a partnership between BTO, RSPB, BirdWatch Ireland and SOC helped by funding from Scottish Natural Heritage and the Gillman Trusts.

BirdTrack is an ideal survey for recording upland birds. If you have seen a ptarmigan, for example, the researchers really want to hear about it through BirdTrack.

Ptarmigan: one of the species researchers want to hear about. Photographer: Don O'Driscoll

For a copy of the leaflet contact robin.anderson@bto.org or phone 01786 466560 or visit

→ **www.bto.org/scotland**

Into Africa

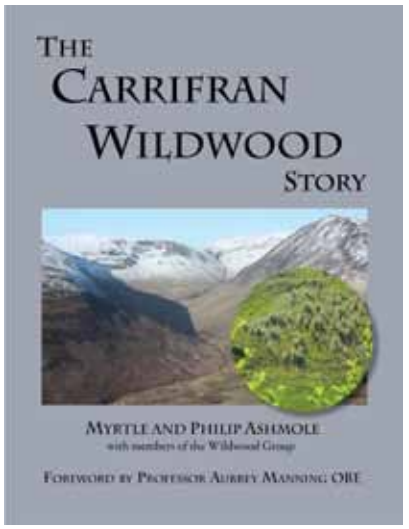
Jane Downall, a John Muir Award provider in the Oldham area, was one of nine people out of 12,000 applicants who won a place on the BBC's *Wildest Dreams* programme.

Jane, who works as a countryside ranger at Daisy Nook Country Park, spent several weeks in Botswana, the Kalahari desert (where she experienced a violent storm) and Zanzibar as well as other parts of Africa, learning to be a wild life film maker and competing for a 12-month contract with the BBC's Natural History Unit.

The 'wildwood' story

Centuries of human activity have virtually wiped out native woodland in the Scottish Borders but a small group of people had a vision of bringing back the trees. They formed the Borders Forest Trust (BFT) and won the support of many people and organisations, including the John Muir Trust and its members. After 10 years the trees are flourishing at Carrifran near Peebles and this year the BFT raised enough money to buy further land at Corehead.

Now the BFT has published *The Carrifran Wildwood Story* by Myrtle and Philip Ashmole, with members of the Wildwood Group, priced £15.
ISBN 978-0-9534346-4-0



Ecosystem approach to managing wild land benefits everyone

STUART BROOKS

The John Muir Trust is responsible for thousands of hectares of some of the wildest and most precious landscapes in Britain. At a time of economic and social pressure, these landscapes require significant management to restore key natural processes and components while facing increasing threats from climate change, energy developments and grazing pressure from deer.

In a keynote article, Stuart Brooks, Chief Executive of the Trust, explains how the Trust is addressing this challenge by embracing an ecosystem approach to managing wild land, an approach which views the wider picture rather than just focussing on individual species or habitats and which recognises the true benefits and values of wild land, not least to ourselves.

Protecting wild land requires an understanding of the environment's complexity.

Over a period of 20 years the John Muir Trust has acquired some spectacular sites and now has an enviable portfolio of eight estates covering more than 24,000 hectares. With this achievement comes a sense of pride but also great responsibility for the people and wild life dependent on these areas. There is also a growing awareness of the value these places have in providing wider public benefits. Our own estate represents a small percentage of the best wild land in Scotland but it provides us with a valuable opportunity to learn and practice new approaches to land management and to share these with others.

Our landholding encompasses some of the wilder elements of our country but it is by no means entirely natural, rather it is the product of centuries of different land management influences. In the process we have lost some of the physical components of our natural world that help to underpin a sustainable yet dynamic system, for example top-line predators. The loss of these key elements is not necessarily catastrophic, it merely changes the natural order of things to an extent that often requires some kind of intervention to address the consequences.

Adding species, as has happened elsewhere in the UK, has had a similar effect in terms of altering the ecology and landscape: so too has managing the landscape for the benefit of single species. In ecological terms mankind is adapting the environment to suit his purposes, often in terms of multiple values and demands. A 'typical' area of wild land in upland Britain might be managed for sheep grazing, sport shooting, timber production, wild life conservation, energy production and recreation. All of these activities, sometimes complementary, sometimes in conflict, are currently 'legitimate' in being supported by both the public and private sector.

As a membership organisation and charity, we have a broad range of stakeholders to consider but we also have a clear overriding purpose or charitable aim which is "to conserve and protect wild places with their indigenous animals, plants and soils for the benefit of present and future generations". So, that becomes our start point, the context for our land management approach.

As a geographer, I am very conscious of patterns and scale. To appreciate these two concepts we often need to stand back and attempt to see the bigger picture. To some extent the approach to nature conservation in the UK over the last 100 years has been the opposite of this: we have tended to focus in on species and places in isolation from their landscape. If we do this we fail to appreciate all the factors that influence the survival of that species. The recognition that our climate is changing has forced us to look more widely and accept that other influences, such as diffuse pollution or habitat fragmentation, might be driving change. There has also been a series of indicators alerting us to the fact that current efforts to conserve our wild life are insufficient.

TOO OFTEN, MOTIVATED BY THE DESIRE TO HOLD ON TO RARE SPECIES, WE WORK AGAINST NATURE, PREVENTING NATURAL PROCESSING FROM TAKING PRECEDENCE.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) took a global perspective on the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being. The MEA concluded that humans have made unprecedented changes to ecosystems in recent decades to meet growing demands for food, fresh water, fibre and energy. Human activities have taken the planet to the edge of a massive wave of species extinctions which is projected to be ten times the current rate and 1000 times the background rate as evidenced in the pollen record. As well as raising awareness of the scale of change, the MEA also helped to promote the concept of ecosystem services and the need to maintain healthy ecosystems in order to support humankind - 'Look after nature to look after ourselves.' In practical terms this might see the expansion of woodlands in order to store carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow down global warming, or the maintenance of native flower habitats to support the healthy populations of insects needed to pollinate our food crops.

In recent years the development of this approach has led to changes in the way we approach land management in general and nature conservation in particular. More emphasis is now being placed on the wider public benefits to be derived from our natural heritage and there is a greater understanding that healthy ecosystems are necessary to maintain our own existence. In the 1990s conservationists fought to stop afforestation of the Flow Country, a battle eventually won on the grounds of protecting the area's unique wild life. The same battle today would almost certainly be expanded to encompass other ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, water filtration and economic benefits derived from green tourism. We have to understand and value the whole ecosystem and all the benefits it can provide.

This recent thinking has also forced us to re-evaluate previous conservation activity focused on single species or habitats. This selective focus contributed to our failure to appreciate the dynamic nature of our environment. With a few exceptions, such as bogs and some woodlands, most of our natural habitats are changing. This is

The wild deer population is higher now than at any time in the last 1000 years. Photographer: Peter Cairns

A Flow Country bog pool at Forsinard, Sutherland. One of the few examples of a naturally functioning ecosystem in the UK. Photographer: Iain Brownlie Roy

Ecosystems require help to build the resilience required to survive new pressures.

Natural vegetation growth can be suppressed due to grazing pressure from wild and domesticated animals. Reducing numbers of animals or excluding them altogether for a period can help to restore some of the natural components of the landscape. Photographer: Laurie Campbell

part and parcel of their natural functions. Too often, motivated by the desire to hold on to rare species, we work against nature, preventing natural processing from taking precedence.[1] Taken to its extreme, this idea of 'leaving it to nature' could be an argument for 'doing nothing' - to just let nature 'get on with it'. This has its attractions, not least from a resourcing perspective, but in a heavily modified landscape where we have to factor in these multiple values, it is rarely a viable option. While allowing our environment to adapt to a changing climate we must build resilience into our ecosystems to accommodate this. This is not a call for abandoning traditional nature conservation but a recognition that a credible nature conservation strategy is one which encompasses actions at multiple levels including the landscape scale.

Ahead of many other conservation organisations, which have in the past focused on the management of species on relatively small sites, the extent of Trust properties has led us towards taking a more comprehensive ecosystem approach. In a nutshell, this involves working with the natural functioning of landscapes and has become manifest in our current biodiversity project where we are attempting to address impacts on our estates at a landscape scale. Our biggest issue is with the management of deer. The wild deer population is higher now than at any time in the last 1000 years[2] - and is expanding. Many areas, on our estates and across the UK, could naturally support woodland cover and its associated wild life if deer numbers were reduced. We are attempting, therefore, to maintain healthy populations of deer at around five per hectare in these areas to enable natural woodland regeneration, ideally without the need for fences. This is a long-term objective and will require considerable resources and co-operation with neighbouring land managers and, importantly, the support of our members. The Trust is currently engaged with the Scottish Government over proposed changes to deer management regulations. We believe a deer management regime developed within the context of creating healthy and functioning ecosystems and landscapes would yield wider public benefits.

As well as their ecological significance, wild deer are also an important part of the rural economy. As alluded to above, there are many other land uses that are important in supporting people and their communities in and around wild land. The Trust has always understood this and actively worked with crofters and communities on its own properties to effect positive change. It is inevitable that there will be differences of opinion and approach to land management which is why we must make every effort to be clear about our intentions and consult with all those who have an interest in what we do. We also actively seek out partnerships with community groups or private estates in wild land areas who share our vision.

By taking an ecosystem approach to management we aim to address these challenges and conflicts by recognising the true benefits and values wild places offer to us all. In practical terms, this will mean increasing our investment and continuing what the Trust has led the way in doing – managing wild land sustainably and holistically for landscape, biodiversity, carbon and water, communities and visitors. ⌐┘

[1]Hughes J and Brooks S (2009) *Living Landscapes, towards ecosystem-based conservation in Scotland.* Scottish Wildlife Trust, Edinburgh.

[2]Wild deer. *Postnote*, February 2009 Number 325. Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology.

THE JOHN MUIR TRUST WOULD LIKE TO THANK ITS CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP, PLEASE CONTACT:
SAM BAUMBER, MEMBERSHIP MANAGER 0131 554 0114 / recruit@jmt.org

Photograph: Glen Nevis by Alex Gillespie.

Strathaird woodland flourishes out of the Sitka's shade

MIKE BROWN

Almost 10 years ago a dozen of us, armed with bush saws, trekked up from our campsite on the beach at Loch Slapin to the slopes below Bla Bheinn. There, on a summer day clear of rain and midges, we started cutting down sad, stunted Sitka spruce on the John Muir Trust's Strathaird estate. Our volunteer conservation work party was among the first to tackle an amazing challenge which had started in 1998: gradually to change the tree cover from planted conifer forests to natural broadleaved woodland, linked up to the natural woods existing on the coast. This ambitious project was one of hundreds across Scotland supported by the Millennium Forest for Scotland initiative.

Some 200 hectares of the Strathaird estate were covered with imported species – Sitka spruce, lodgepole pine and European and Japanese larch. Some formed dense commercial stands of timber, supporting little or no biodiversity. Others, such as our target trees, were making a poor showing on unsuitable soil, such as deep peat.

After felling each tree, we cut off the branches and left them on the heather. Andrew Campbell, then the Trust's local representative and now Head of Land Management, explained that this scattered brash would protect the natural regeneration of indigenous trees, such as birch, rowan and hazel. Grazing deer would be reluctant to pick their way through the clutter of tree litter to feed on the seedlings. The goal was to see these hills covered once more with natural woodland and its diverse flora and fauna. But would this bold endeavour succeed?

Today the transformation of Strathaird is well underway under the supervision of Alasdair Macpherson, the Trust's Land Manager for Skye and Knoydart, along with estate foreman John MacRae and Willie Robertson, the estate worker. Two thirds of the alien plantings have been removed. Volunteer work parties, Trust staff and commercial harvesting companies have all contributed to the clearing. Some commercial stands remain, awaiting appropriate market conditions. Odd pockets left by commercial foresters are still being cleared by staff while volunteers and John Muir Award groups are taking out conifer saplings which still sprout on cleared land.

Already the new landscape is taking shape. Healthy young woodland, predominantly of birch but including rowan, hazel, alder and sallow, is spreading across the hillsides, a pattern of dappled shades and varied shapes. Some of this growth is the product of successful natural regeneration, particularly where seed-source trees exist on the edges of the old forests, along water courses or on coastal strips. Other trees – around 60 or 70 thousand - have been planted by volunteers and commercial operators.

Alasdair says deer hampered the regeneration until a few years ago but now they have been fenced out and numbers inside and outside the fence are kept under control. Reducing the deer population has increased its health and decreased its impact on habitat. Out on the higher hill carcases are sometimes left for the eagles but otherwise they are recovered and sold on to venison dealers. A new refrigerated deer larder on the estate has helped the Trust to develop this business. Clearing the old woodland has also generated

Strathaird estate viewed across Loch Slapin. The remaining blocks of conifer plantations can be seen to the left, below Bla Bheinn. Native woodland is regenerating between the conifers and the shore. Photographer: Keith Brame

Birch saplings on land cleared of conifers. The measuring stick is two meters tall. Photographer: Lester Standen

income for the Trust. Much of the felled wood was of poor quality and left to rot, enriching the soil and providing habitats, but other parts of the forest yielded marketable timber. Sawn spruce has been shipped to the building trade in Ireland and, more remarkably, other cleared timber has been exported for pulping in Finland! To meet a thriving local market for firewood, the Trust invested a few years ago in log-chopping machinery. This year 1100 tons of cleared lodgepole pine, Sitka spruce and larch is being profitably processed for the wood stoves of Skye.

The Trust is currently drawing up a Forest Plan for Strathaird, required under the Scottish Rural Development Programme which replaces the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme which ended last year. The new plan will cover all proposed woodland activities on the estate for the next 20 years with detailed proposals for the next 10. Once the plan is approved by the Forestry Commission, felling in that period will not require a licence and planting and felling grants can be applied for. ⌜⌟

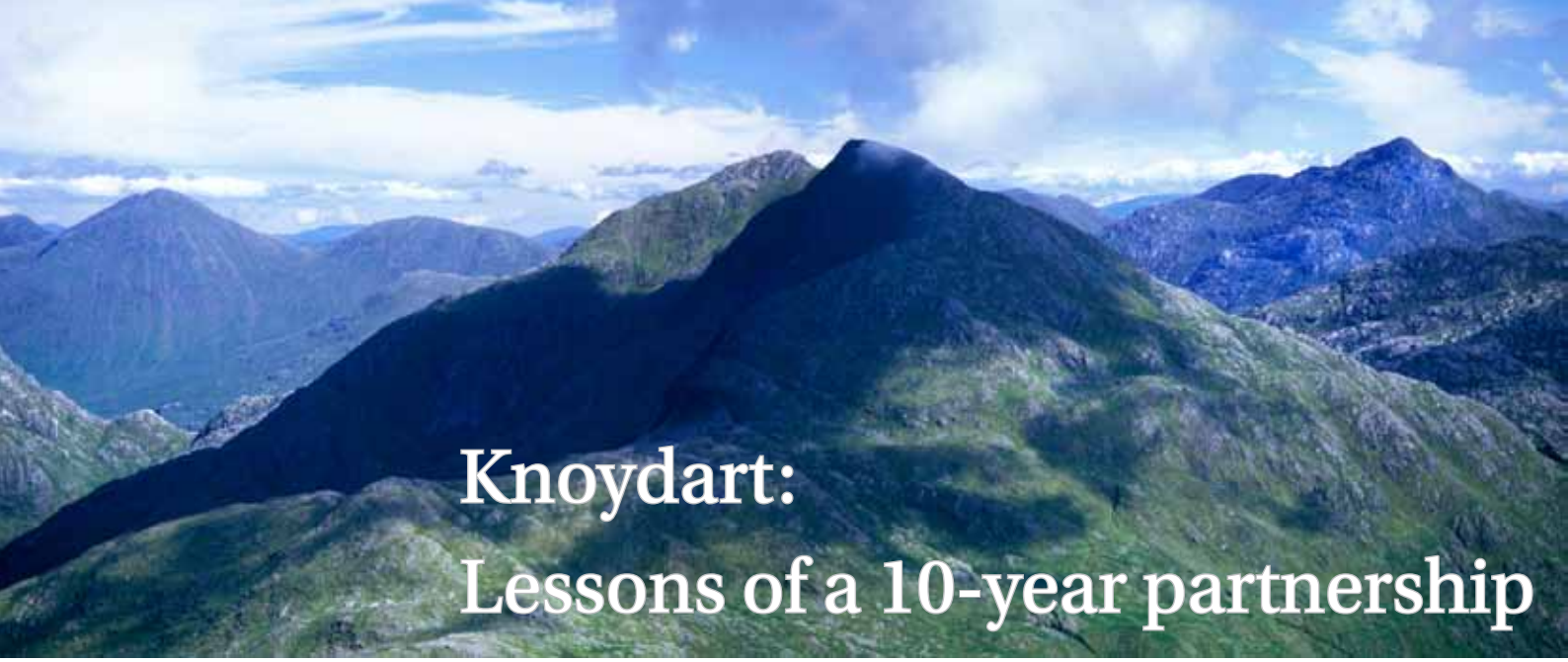
MEASURING THE GAINS FROM NEW WOODLANDS

Listing which species are benefiting from the regeneration of Strathaird's natural woodland is difficult, explains Lester Standen, the Trust's Wildland Ranger. "We don't manage land to help specific species – we want to manage whole ecosystems. We are encouraging natural processes by inhibiting intrusive non-native species such as the Sitka spruce." The estate is of considerable environmental importance. A number of designations apply to different parts of the estate: SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), SAC (Special Area of Conservation) and SPA (Special Protection area).

"The consequences of regeneration are complex and will require careful monitoring," says Lester. "As well as forest clearance, there have been changes in farming practice – sheep numbers have dropped dramatically." He does expect to see an increase in insect life – he cites the recent spotting of the rare argent and sable moth – and this will encourage bird life. Open woodland will benefit the song thrush – a Biodiversity Action Plan species which is in decline and under threat. Stonechats, white throats, tree creepers and long-tailed tits are also expected to increase.

Uncleared woodland brash provides a home for wrens (and has even been found to conceal an otter holt). An increase in small birds should also benefit species further up the food chain, such as sparrow hawks. Open broad-leaved woodland will increase opportunities for flowers such as bluebells, primroses and orchids. As the new natural woodlands develop into a corridor and run up towards Bla Bheinn they may benefit many species, including long-eared and pipistrelle bats and dormice. Another gain from the new woodland policy is the rediscovery of traces of past human activity. The ruins of an old farming community have long been hidden in the conifer plantations and these once more are visible.

The fly agaric is thriving again in deciduous woodland where it lives in symbiosis with birch trees. Photographer: Fran Lockhart



Knoydart: Lessons of a 10-year partnership

In 1983 the John Muir Trust's original priority was to purchase areas of wild land to protect them from inappropriate development. However it became apparent that land purchase on its own could only safeguard a small proportion of Scotland's wild areas. Although the Trust's objective has remained the same – to conserve and protect wild places – its approach has evolved as the organisation has grown and matured. Today, influencing others is central to the work of the Trust, as Fran Lockhart explains.

We endeavour to influence other land managers by demonstrating good practice in the way we care for our properties and to influence communities by assisting them to purchase and manage far greater areas of wild land than we could ever hope to own ourselves. Partnerships between the John Muir Trust and other organisations are part of this broad spectrum of work, influencing society to conserve and protect wild places. This involvement started in earnest 10 years ago with the community buy-out of the Knoydart peninsula.

The Knoydart peninsula lies between Loch Hourn and Loch Nevis in the area of west Inverness-shire known as Na Garbh Chriochan – the 'Rough Bounds'. Na Garbh Chriochan is the old name for the rugged terrain on this stretch of coast, including Moidart, Arisaig and Morar. Knoydart has had a long and troubled history. It was Clan Ranald territory in medieval times when starvation and thieving were considered normal. During the 1745 uprising it provided some of the most committed Jacobite supporters. In the mid-19th century it witnessed arguably one of the most brutal clearances in Scotland and in 1948 the 'Seven Men of Knoydart' staged their land raid.

The peninsula continued to focus attention on land reform when, in 1999, it became one of the first successful community buy-outs. The community of Knoydart, with support from the John Muir Trust, Highland Council, the Chris Brasher Trust and neighbouring Kilchoan estate, successfully bought the estate from Knoydart Peninsula Ltd which had gone into receivership. This was a momentous occasion for all involved and ended many years of uncertainty for the people and neglect – some might even say abuse – of this 17,000 hectare stretch of magnificent wild land. The buy-out cemented the relationship between Knoydart and the John Muir Trust which has had a place on the Knoydart Foundation Board ever since.

Knoydart is best known for its inaccessibility - it can only be reached on foot or by boat – and possibly for having Scotland's remotest pub. But it is, first and foremost, an area of employment and settlement for its local population. The aim of the Foundation is to preserve, enhance and develop Knoydart for the wellbeing of its people and visitors while seeking to encourage the preservation of its landscape, wildlife, natural resources, culture and rural heritage.

Much has happened in the 10 years since then, when things were done with a gentleman's agreement and a handshake, with no formal written agreement. Given that people come and go and things get forgotten there have been times, probably inevitably, when communications between Trust and Foundation have not been as clear as they should and misunderstandings have occurred. In recent years, time and effort has been put in by both sides to clarify the relationship, to ensure we work more closely on wild land projects.

In the early years the Trust occasionally provided financial

Knoydart tracks. Photographer: John Cleare

Above: The peaks of Knoydart. Photographer: John Cleare

support for general Knoydart projects but in recent years small amounts of funding have been directed towards projects linked more closely to our own objectives. These have included contributions to the ranger posts and to parts of the ambitious Forest Access and Regeneration Project. The Trust contributed £10,000 to aspects of this including:

- native woodland regeneration on 53 hectares including natural regeneration, enrichment planting and the management of existing woodland;
- the restoration of ancient native woodland through the removal of *Rhododendron ponticum* and exotic conifers;
- the conversion of mono-cultural conifer plantation to mixed woodland with a dominant element of native woodland suitable for management under a continuous cover system;
- the eradication of *Rhododendron ponticum* from non-woodland areas;

Other Trust contributions have been equally important including the hugely popular week-long volunteer work parties concentrating on the successful rhododendron control, beach cleans and ragwort clearance. The Trust has also had significant input into the Land Management Plan through its membership of the Knoydart Land Management Group.

So what of the future? Our Wild Land Biodiversity Project is in its third year on the Trust's neighbouring property on Knoydart – Li and Coire Dhorrcail. Trust staff are looking at how this work could be linked more closely to the habitat monitoring being carried out by Knoydart staff. The Trust's Biodiversity Officer, Liz Auty, and Chief Scientific Officer, Mike Daniels, undertook a field visit to look at opportunities for working together, increasing monitoring and sharing data, all with the goal of taking a more integrated approach to large-scale landscape conservation.

■ Fran Lockhart is the John Muir Trust's Partnership Manager (Nevis, Knoydart and Schiehallion).

Inverie village, the social hub of Knoydart. Photographer: Sam Baumber

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

. . . on the peninsula

This year the residents of the Knoydart peninsula, friends, partners and visitors have been celebrating the 10th anniversary of the community buy-out. As well as the ubiquitous ceilidhs, Inverie has echoed to the sound of a music festival attended by 500 people, the hammering of wood against metal as an anniversary totem pole was carved and applause from the tiny village hall as lectures were delivered by such disparate people as Mark Woombs, local marine biologist; Jim Manthorpe, local author; Mick Tighe, mountain rescue expert; and novelist Ian McEwan.

In June more than 50 volunteers, including a strong John Muir Trust crew, helped push Knoydart towards the Forest Trust's aim of totally eradicating *Rhododendron ponticum*. True to form, the hardy volunteers were among the last to leave the weekend ceilidh, replete with goat burgers and heroic stories of rhody conquests!

Below: Carving the commemorative totem pole. Photographer: Cath Curd

. . . and in London

Celebrations have not been restricted to Inverie. Before James Hawkins' Knoydart paintings were exhibited in the village hall, they were shown in the SW1 gallery in London, where an evening reception was attended by 100 Trust members and friends. Pictured below at the event, from left, are: Angela Williams of the Knoydart Foundation, Nigel Hawkins, former CEO of the Trust, and hosts Flick and James Hawkins. James Hawkins has made four prints from his collection available for sale in aid of the Foundation through www.knoydart-foundation.com

Photographer: Sam Baumber

Reversing Muir's lost battle: undamming Hetch Hetchy

Peter Coates reports on an ambitious campaign to resurrect Yosemite's 'twin valley' which John Muir fought in vain to save.

In August 1987, Donald P Hodel, Interior Secretary in the Reagan administration, visited Yosemite National Park for the official dedication of Mount Ansel Adams. As his party descended Lembert Dome after a hike, conversation turned to his support for the removal of two ageing dams in Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park. At this point someone reportedly showed Hodel a photograph. Taken the previous month, it depicted the face of the park's largest man-made structure, O'Shaughnessy Dam, disfigured by a black plastic crack unrolled by a protestor who had rappelled down the dam's face. Next to the mock crack, the activist had sprayed the slogan 'Free the rivers! – J Muir'. Soon afterwards, entirely out of the blue, Hodel precipitated a national conversation about the dam's future by recommending a study of the feasibility of removal.

This most infamous of American dams holds back 117 billion gallons of Tuolumne River water within a 300-feet deep reservoir that occupies 1900 acres of Hetch Hetchy Valley. When John Muir first visited the valley (which bears the local Indian name for its lush grasses) in the autumn of 1871, he marvelled that "the world is so rich as to possess at least two Yosemites instead of one". Just 15 miles north of its larger 'twin', Hetch Hetchy was at much the same altitude, carved by the same fluvial and glacial action, and replicated all its celebrated features: towering granite cliffs of nearly 2000 feet, such as Kolana Rock; high waterfalls, notably Tueeulala which Muir described as "the most graceful fall I have ever seen", elegant groves of oak and verdant alpine meadows. Not that the valley was devoid of people. Sheepherders (mostly Basque) and Euro-American cattlemen capitalised on its juicy herbage and Muir encountered Paiute Indians shouldering acorn-filled baskets. Hetch Hetchy's cliffs bore pictographs carved by over-wintering indigenes and boulders on the valley floor were pitted with mortar holes in which they ground acorns.

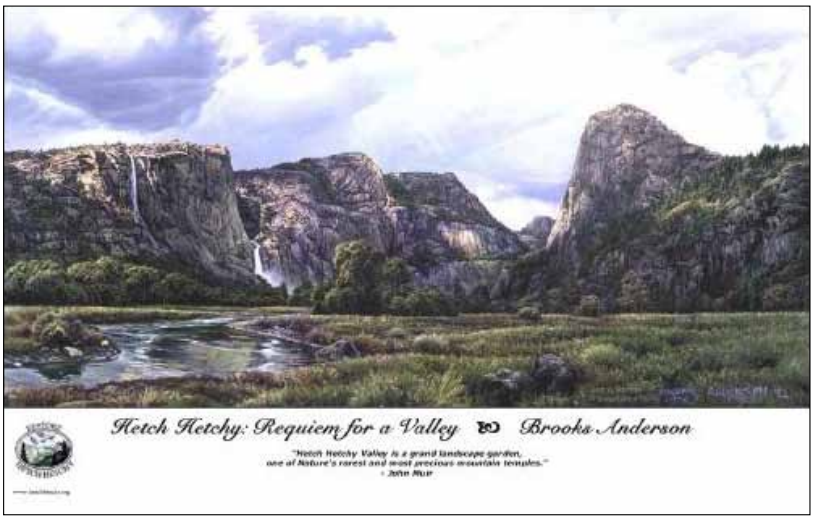
As well as sublime mountain scenery, Hetch Hetchy presented a fine site for a dam. To the west, the burgeoning metropolis of San Francisco consumed 25 million gallons of water daily. Hetch Hetchy had been identified as early as the 1880s as the perfect solution to the city's chronic water shortage - a problem the earthquake and fires of 1906 underscored. The water was of the highest quality, the valley would cost nothing and, unlike its famous twin, it had no existing defenders.

In 1908 Interior Secretary Garfield granted San Francisco permission to dam the valley, subject to Congressional approval. This galvanised the elderly Muir for his final and most momentous battle: if somewhere as stupendous as Hetch Hetchy - and within a national park - could not be protected from desecration, then nowhere was sacred or safe. "Dam Hetch Hetchy!" said Muir. "As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man." San Francisco's mayor, James Phelan, dismissed wilderness lovers as an elite clique hopelessly out of touch with the interests of hard-working ordinary folk, especially their need for a basic resource like clean drinking water. He decried dam opponents as self-indulgent, pleasure-seeking descendants of aristocratic foxhunters!

Muir and his fledgling Sierra Club launched the first grassroots environmental campaign on a national scale in the history of America, perhaps the world. Hetch Hetchy's champions mobilised public opinion through a flood of articles, pamphlets, petitions and letters. They never denied San Francisco's need for a reliable and affordable water supply and suggested alternative sites outside the park. Muir's proposal for a grand circular drive to exploit the valley's economic value as a tourist destination indicates the great lengths to which they were willing to go to protect the valley. Dam proponents sought to appease critics by insisting that the sparkling new lake would enhance the scenery and improve public access. The epic confrontation (which divided the San Francisco-based Sierra Club) dragged on for years until 1913 when the authorising Raker Act passed through Congress on the strength of abstentions and absences. When construction began in 1914 a demoralised Muir pronounced Hetch Hetchy Valley dead and when he died, less than a year later, many claimed that he had died of a broken heart.

Some good came of this bitter defeat. The dam proposal provided a seminal first opportunity to put the case for wilderness preservation before a national audience. "Remember Hetch Hetchy!" became the

*Hetch Hetchy: Requiem for a Valley** Oil on canvas by Brooks Anderson. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy of www.BrooksAndersonArt.com



* The poster can be purchased on www.hetchhetchy.org/catalog

In 250 years, Nature could fulfill Muir's dream and restore Hetch Hetchy's glory.

'Hetch Hetchy Landscape Garden' as published in *Sierra Club Bulletin*, Vol VII, No 4, June 1910. (Photo: Herbert W Gleason and Sierra Club)

rallying cry when other protected areas were threatened - witness the successful 1950s campaign against the proposed Echo Park Dam in Dinosaur National Monument on the Colorado/Utah border. The most important immediate lesson, however, was that national parks could not be protected on aesthetic grounds alone. At a time when the ecological case for preservation had yet to be articulated, park advocates needed to demonstrate that nature-based tourism could generate more income than natural resource extraction. Historians have traditionally presented the Hetch Hetchy controversy as a straightforward clash between the forces of economic development and wilderness preservation. But it was more of a struggle between two kinds of development - for water storage or a nature tourism that demanded roads, campsites, hotels and other recreational infrastructure.

Although any proposal for a dam in a protected area has faced opposition since the 1950s, nobody until recently has been suggesting the removal of existing dams. When Brower made his elegiac film about Hetch Hetchy, *Two Yosemites* (1955), he assumed the valley was lost forever. By the 1980s, however, a generation of early 20th-century dams was showing signs of wear and tear while a more ecologically aware public was less enamoured of the technological achievement they epitomised. However, given the Reagan presidency's dismal record, the environmentalist community was completely unprepared for, and understandably sceptical of, Hodel's provocative suggestion in 1987. In fact, Hodel had no ulterior motives.

Reaction to the proposal illustrated that the basic alignment had not changed much in three-quarters of a century: those who think San Francisco has a birthright to Hetch Hetchy's water versus those who believe the valley belongs to the nation. Hodel's successor in the administration led by George Bush (senior) had no interest in following up on the study Hodel had commissioned.

Hodel's bold idea was rekindled, however, in 2000 with the establishment of an independent campaign organisation, 'Restore Hetch Hetchy'. Subsequently a host of established environmental organisations, including the Sierra Club, have supported the crusade for restitution. The *New York Times,* which opposed the dam in 1913, now backs a feasibility study. The Tuolumne Me-Wuk (Miwok) Tribal Council, whose ancestors foraged in the valley, named its features and maintained a presence until the eve of inundation, has lent its backing. California's governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, is sympathetic too. In July 2006, his Department of Water Resources concluded that dam removal without forfeiting San Francisco's water supply is "technically feasible".

The decision to remove the dam would be no more revolutionary than the original decision to insert one in the valley. Removal would not spell catastrophe for the San Francisco Bay area's 2.5 million residents. As in the early 1900s, alternatives exist.

Three million visit Yosemite National Park each year. Yosemite Valley, which hosts the majority, is bursting at the seams. Only two per cent of park visitors go to Hetch Hetchy yet a restored valley would relieve pressure on its twin without replicating its highly commercialised character.

A small dam in the national park, built in 1917 on the Merced river, has already been removed and there are encouraging signs elsewhere in California. Yet there is still no political will in San Francisco and the immediate prospects at the national level are not encouraging. However fitting it would be, it is highly unlikely that the 100th anniversary of Muir's death in 2014 will be marked by a Congressional vote to remove the dam that caused him so much grief. The cost of restoration should certainly not act as a deterrent; after all, the cost of restoring the Statue of Liberty ($500 million) was raised entirely from private donations and Yosemite National Park enjoys only slightly less national heritage status. (Pieces of the smashed up dam could be sold to help fund recovery.) Whenever the reservoir is finally drained, the river is likely to find its old channel pretty easily: there is a lack of silt thanks to the granite rocks of the watershed. Grass will blanket the freshly exposed ground within a few years and shrubs and trees sprout within a decade. Fifty years later, the floral and faunal features of a mature ecosystem will be in place again. And before a century has elapsed, re-growth of lichen on the canyon walls will obscure the ugly bathtub ring. By the 250th anniversary of Muir's death, it is not unrealistic to imagine that this earthly paradise shall be fully regained. ⌜⌟

THE AUTHOR

■ Peter Coates is professor of American and environmental history at the University of Bristol. He has hiked in the Sierra Nevada on many occasions, including (nearly 30 years ago) the entire length of the Pacific Crest Trail that passes through the range. His most recent books are *Salmon* (Reaktion Books) and *American Perceptions of Immigrant and Invasive Species* (University of California Press).

WEBSITES

Restore Hetch Hetchy

→ www.hetchhetchy.org/

→ california.sierraclub.org/hetchhetchy/history.html

Creating employment is no excuse for rushed and inappropriate planning decisions.

Economic recession may threaten wild land

The world-wide recession and squeeze on credit have reduced investment in new projects amid widespread business pessimism. One might assume that this would reduce the pressure from industrial and commercial development on wild land but, as Helen McDade, Head of Policy at the John Muir Trust, points out, the reverse may be the case.

Despite the present economic crisis facing developers, conservation organisations may have to brace themselves for a rush of badly-considered applications. Recently the Trust has been involved in opposing a number of developments which seriously threaten wild land including the Muaitheabhal and Pairc wind developments in the Western Isles (see below) and an application on Loch Rannoch which includes a seven-storey structure built out in the loch. In the current economic climate there is a serious risk of decision-makers in the planning process offsetting adverse impacts on natural heritage against potential economic and social gain. As a result, the John Muir Trust and other environmentalists must be ready to participate with both economic and environmental arguments. The situation would be all too familiar to John Muir who faced similar pressures 100 years ago in the campaign to save Hetch Hetchy (see pages 16-17.)

There are a number of possible explanations for this increased planning activity. Applications lodged before 4 August this year avoided new regulations requiring higher levels of consultation with the local community. There is also evidence that decision-makers – officials and elected politicians alike - will give uncritical backing to a development on the grounds that "the area desperately needs jobs". So an application which, in more measured times, might have been sent back for reconsideration because of its environmental impacts might now be passed. An encouraging example for developers is the Trump development on Menie Links, Aberdeenshire, which was acknowledged to have significant adverse effects on important natural heritage but was approved because of claimed economic benefits.

There is an imperative behind the new planning regulations to "speed up the planning process". However, coming to the correct decision is more important than speed. The irony of a hurried approach is that, if all aspects are not properly assessed, there is a big risk of adverse financial implications later on. The rationale behind the Loch Rannoch development is to bring in 'the big spenders' from all over the world. However, despoiling this fantastic part of a National Scenic Area could lose more tourism revenue from a decline in other visitors to the area than it gains. Unfortunately, the positive side of the balance (eg jobs now) can seem, at first

National Scenic Area on Lewis saved from wind turbine development

Developers proposing to build a major wind power development in a National Scenic Area have failed to persuade the Reporter at the Public Local Inquiry that there is an economic case to outweigh the adverse environmental effects of the development. This information was obtained by the John Muir Trust following a Freedom of Information request.

Beinn Mhor Power had applied for planning permission for the Muaitheabhal development – a 53-turbine installation on the Eisgein Estate on Lewis. Thirty of the 125-metre high turbines would have been in a National Scenic Area (NSA). The proposed site, 16 miles southwest of Stornoway, covers almost 8000 hectares (to gain a measure of this area consider that the city of Dundee extends to 6500 hectares) and is bordered to the north and west by Loch Seaforth. The construction of the three-megawatt turbines would require 25 miles of access tracks, 17 borrow pits (quarries) for the extraction of stone and nine temporary construction compounds.

John Muir Trust staff and advisers participated throughout the two-week Inquiry in May last year. They gave evidence regarding the visual and landscape effects as well as the economic and social implications of the proposal and were therefore keen to see whether their arguments, alongside those of Scottish Natural Heritage and local objectors, had carried the day. At stake is some of the most stunning scenery in Scotland.

In a very unusual move, the Scottish Government released the Report following Freedom of Information requests - without giving a decision on the application.

The Inquiry had been given a limited remit:

". . . to consider . . . whether the Muaitheabhal wind farm meets the test set out in paragraph

View across Loch Seaforth to proposed wind turbine site. Photographer: Jamie Grant

Loch Rannoch, looking towards the proposed loch-side site of a 7-storey luxury hotel
Photographer: Ken Paterson

glance, to be more definite than the negative (eg loss of tourism jobs later).

Another important reason for considering and advocating on all aspects of a development is that it is vital that local communities in areas where applications occur understand that the Trust has considered their economic and social interests as well as wild places. Often there is no-one in the local community with the time and expertise to analyse thoroughly the economic claims included in an application. If the Trust wishes to oppose the application – as in the case of the Muaitheabhal application – it makes no sense to restrict ourselves to the environmental aspects thus potentially losing the argument and possibly causing resentment within the local community, who might feel 'nature is prized over human needs'.

The Trust and other environmental organisations with expert staff and advisers can analyse the evidence and demonstrate the full implications of a proposal. In the case of the Muaitheabhal wind scheme, expert advice to the Trust suggested that the number of jobs which would be created would be about one third of the number claimed. This is a vitally important point for the local community to know and decreases the impetus to push through a development. By genuinely seeking sustainable development solutions, the John Muir Trust can make a completely rounded case and seek a win-win solution for community and natural heritage. In so doing, we aim to gain respect for our considered positions and holistic views. As John Muir said: "Our goal should not be blind opposition to progress, but rather opposition to blind progress." ⌜⌟

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25 of NPPG 14: Natural Heritage in order for a development which would affect a designated area of national natural heritage importance to be permitted. This test is:

• *whether the wind farm would compromise the objectives of designation of the South Lewis, Harris and North Uist NSA and its overall integrity; or*

• *whether, in the event that the wind farm has significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the NSA has been designated, these effects are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance."*

NSAs are Scotland's only national landscape designation. They are areas of land considered of national significance on the basis of their outstanding scenic interest which must be conserved as part of the country's natural heritage. By restricting the remit at this Inquiry, Ministers excluded environmental effects other than those for which the NSA is designated, eg it excluded effects on biodiversity or on the environment outwith the NSA. However, the duty placed upon the Minister for Energy, Jim Mather, makes it clear that all relevant facts are to be taken into account.

Despite the restriction, the main conclusion of the Reporter, Miss Janet McNair, was very encouraging and backed the Trust's position regarding the importance of the landscape. Miss McNair's finding was that "having had regard to the terms of NPPG 14 (government policy on natural heritage), particularly paragraphs 24-26, I conclude:

■ "that the wind farm would compromise the objectives of designation of the South Lewis, Harris and North Uist NSA and its overall integrity; and

■ that the wind farm would have significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the NSA has been designated and that these effects are not clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance."

While the Trust is delighted with the Reporter's conclusions, there are concerns about what will happen next. By the time the report was released, the developer had already lodged an amendment to the application. The Trust's view is that the application should be a new one as the turbine heights and positions are significantly changed. We welcome the removal of turbine sites from the National Scenic Area and a reduction in the number from 53 to 39 but the proposed turbine heights have been increased by 20 metres to 145 metres. So, at the time of going to press, the Trust's team is closely considering the new application and its response.

Other documents released by the Scottish Government to the Trust, following its Freedom of Information request, show that the developer has been submitting further economic evidence directly to government officials throughout 2009. The Trust will seek a meeting with the Minister where we can raise our concerns. These are important issues – not only for this area of South Lewis – but also for the planning system and our democratic process. ⌜⌟

Isle of Eigg shows how small and remote communities can be energy pioneers.

Exemplar island flies the green flag

JAMIE GRANT

Remote communities face particular challenges in generating power and achieving sustainability. Jamie Grant visited the island of Eigg and found that the residents of this far-flung island are setting an example for everyone. They are drawing electricity from their own de-centralised, renewable sources. They are tackling climate change, cutting fuel poverty and empowering their community to dare to dream of a truly sustainable future. In doing so, they have challenged us all to 'democratise' energy rather than allow corporate power to drive industrial-scale renewable developments into our most fragile landscapes.

The *Loch Nevis* disgorged her passengers on to the pier at Eigg to a riotous burst of bagpipes and hail. A lone piper at the top of the slipway played resolutely on through the downpour as the rest of us scurried for cover. I watched the squall blow over in a small shelter on the pier with an assortment of bedraggled islanders and visitors. Someone pulled out a squeeze box and a party started.

The island of Eigg already felt very different from my last visit 18 years ago. Some of the most striking changes were physical. A long stone and concrete pier now allows the big ferry a firm stopping off point. The small tearoom near the old jetty has been expanded into a shop and impromptu ceilidh house. But the greatest transformation by far has been in the island's spirit. In 1991 I remember a lonely walk over the island to the beach of the Singing Sands on the north side. If it hadn't been for the growl of diesel generators I would have thought the scattered crofts long-deserted. I left haunted by the island's beauty - and sense of abandonment.

This time the island had a mood of celebration. The tearoom, where islanders once had to ask permission from the landowner to hold a meeting, rang with laughter as locals gathered to share a few drinks with the tourists. The island's 90 or so residents were clearly still enjoying their hard-won independence from feudal domination back in 1997. Now the islanders are in the middle of a second, green revolution. The signs were everywhere. An electric van carried the luggage from the ferry to the 'Big White House', formerly the laird's house, which is being converted into the Earth Connections Sustainability Centre. Behind it, four wind turbines help deliver renewable energy to the entire island.

I wanted to find out if the Eigg experience could inspire communities across Scotland to cut their dependence on carbon fuels. Could this remote island help lead us all out of the labyrinth, towards a genuinely sustainable future?

John Booth looked like he had the answers as he purposefully led the way through the fields in front of his house. A prime mover in the island's conversion to home-grown energy, John kept up an excited commentary on the relative merits of solar, wind and hydro power as I struggled to keep up with his electric pace. It crossed my mind that the island could have been powered on his energy and commitment alone as he led me along a muddy track over a gentle brae, beyond which the four 30ft wind turbines whirred contentedly away in a steady easterly breeze. I had half expected them to jar against the island's clear, open lines. But they sat comfortably in the landscape, the slanted peak of An Sgurr casting a long shadow far above them in the evening light.

The Island of Eigg from the sea: inspiring a world-wide interest in sustainability.
All photos - Photographer: Jamie Grant

John explained that most of the island's electricity comes from a 100kW hydro scheme, supported by the wind generators together with a bank of solar PV electric cells. Constant power is distributed via a bank of powerful batteries and underground cables to every household on the island.

Celebrations a-float. Musicians hitch a ride on the island's electric van.

Sue Hollands at home on Eigg.

"Our model is the first in the world to have integrated three renewable technologies into a grid system," he proudly told me.

It is the islanders' use of a mix of renewable technologies that has overcome the principal problem of variability with green power. "The hydro scheme provides back up for the wind turbines on calm days, just as solar power makes up for the drop in rainfall over the summer months," John added.

> OUR MODEL IS THE FIRST IN THE WORLD TO HAVE INTEGRATED THREE RENEWABLE TECHNOLOGIES INTO A GRID SYSTEM . . .
>
> JOHN BOOTH

Community participation and ownership has also been critical to the project's success. Residents contributed over £200,000 to the £1.7 million project through the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust and have dedicated an enormous amount of voluntary time and effort to its development. "This unique experiment in delivering renewable energy to a small, scattered community works because we own and run it ourselves," John said. It is little wonder that community groups in similar remote areas have been beating a path to Eigg from all over the world. John is advising communities as far away as Norway, Indonesia and British Columbia on how they can put in similar systems.

I left John to walk back over the island to the Singing Sands, retracing my journey of nearly 20 years before. The single standing stone still offered the only sustained resistance to the wind on Eigg's central high-blown, treeless plateau. The old shop (now a museum) remained although it had been gnawed away by sea salt, rodents and the passing years. The biggest change I noticed as I walked past the crofts at Cleadale was the silence. The diesel generators had gone.

Sue Hollands stood on the back step of her home in Cleadale, sipping tea, waiting for a break in the rain so she could get back to work in her garden. Rainy interruptions are part of daily life on the north side of Eigg. On stormy days she watches angry showers whip in off the Atlantic. Today a fine drizzle hung over the Singing Sands like a veil of soft muslin. Sue doesn't mind the rain interrupting her work on the immaculate garden beds, fertilised with seaweed from the shoreline. She just reminds herself that it all helps provide energy from the hydro scheme on the high burn on the rocky ground above her house. Her cup of tea was supplied and heated courtesy of the heavens.

It sounds idyllic but Sue's electricity has its limitations. Eigg's residents have to make do with a restricted supply compared with the unlimited energy most of us expect from the National Grid. To control demand every household is restricted to a maximum use of 5kW of electricity (the equivalent of two electric kettles) at any one time. The supply is automatically tripped to any house that goes over this limit. Sue has found it easy to run her house on this finite energy supply. She never puts more than one big appliance on at a time and keeps a constant tab on her electricity use with the OWL energy monitor above her sink. "I'm always looking to keep our electricity use down," said Sue. "Last week I was thrilled to find a kettle that boils water with 1.5kW." Before the island's grid was installed her family was dependant on a costly diesel generator that could only muster around 2.5kW. "This has made a huge difference to us," she told me. "Electricity is now far cheaper and far more reliable than it used to be."

> RESIDENTS' MEETINGS BUZZ WITH PLANS TO IMPROVE THE INSULATION OF THEIR HOMES, INSTALL SOLAR PANELLING, HARVEST MORE WOOD FUEL AND CUT TRANSPORT EMISSIONS.

The success of Eigg's electrification projects has encouraged residents like Sue to re-evaluate all aspects of their lives. "I'm thinking of cutting back on my work at the school to dedicate more time to the croft," she told me. "More of us are growing or rearing our own, sourcing what we need from closer to home, and learning to cook and eat in season."

Sue's commitment to help tackle climate change is mirrored by community action. The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust is the only Scottish finalist in the NESTA lottery-backed 'Big Green Challenge' to communities who are keen to cut their dependence on fossil fuels. (The winner will be announced next January.) Residents' meetings buzz with plans to improve the insulation of their homes, install solar panelling, harvest more wood fuel and cut transport emissions. Heating in the community buildings and a winter bus service run on bio-fuel from the chip oil used on the ferry.

By the time we were all on the pier waiting for the ferry off the island the clouds were marching in again. The piper was back on duty and many of the islanders had come down to wave goodbye. I stood on the ferry's deck as we pulled away from the pier to watch a bright window of blue sky close in fast behind us. It crossed my mind that it could be many years again before I made it back to Eigg but it didn't seem to matter. I knew that the inspiration drawn from this weathered isle and its people would stay with me forever.

Further information:

→ www.isleofeigg.net

Award opens up wild places to everyone

When the John Muir Award was launched in 1997, a key aim was to ensure that social circumstances didn't exclude people from opportunities to experience wild places.

Heritage Lottery funding in 2000 consolidated this commitment – 25 per cent of Awards should be achieved by individuals from 'social inclusion' backgrounds. Every year since, this target has been met or exceeded.

This has involved working with a wide variety of groups - including homeless and unemployed adults; people with physical or learning disabilities or mental health issues; schools in Social Inclusion Priority areas; alternative curriculum and pupil support services; adult addiction groups; asylum seekers and disadvantaged women's groups. Examples of this diverse activity are described on these pages.

John Muir's axiom, "everybody needs beauty as well as bread", applies across society. The Trust's vision includes the goal that "wild places are valued by everyone". These are explicitly inclusive statements which the John Muir Award actively addresses. Research on the health impacts of the Award by Dr Richard Mitchell at Glasgow University concluded: "aspirations for visiting wild places increased, particularly among those from the poorest backgrounds. The study showed that those in the poorest circumstances were much less likely to have visited wild places before their Award experience, and that perhaps this group was most positively affected by their experience."

In fact, basic environmental awareness can be shockingly absent, says Rob Bushby, the John Muir Award Manager. "In the last year Award staff have come across inner-city groups who, collectively, had never seen a tree; one 16 year old, looking at a sheep-flecked Cumbrian fellside asked 'are those cows?' For reasons of health, awareness, spirituality, connectedness, responsibility and sense of place, the work of the John Muir Trust and many others with this 'inclusion' agenda is essential."

Woodland calms excluded pupils

A group of children who had been excluded from primary 6 classes in Worcestershire worked together during their alternative curriculum programme to achieve their John Muir Award. In a little-used area of the Wyre Forest, and with help from the Forestry Commission, they have been identifying wildlife, tasting wild food, making natural shelters and creating natural art. They have built bird and dormice boxes to encourage wild life.

Experiencing nature appears to have had a calming influence on many of the children. One child, although he had forgotten to take his Ritalin, was able to remain calm all day through being in the wood and has since had his dosage cut by 75%. Their leader, Sarah Robertshaw, says: "They are not the same children. It's easier to get them engaged: they are not just in a world of their own." She says using the John Muir Award puts a different slant on everything: "It brings out the wonder and beauty of being in nature. It is a beautiful way of working with kids and encourages them to look at the bigger picture."

Making sense of wild places

At New Bridge Learning Centre in Lancashire three groups of pupils aged 16 to 19 have worked with staff and local rangers towards their John Muir Discovery Award. Each group included young people with different abilities: some had profound and multiple learning difficulties, others had mobility issues or visual impairment. Their teachers ensured they understood the Award and created a programme of multi-sensory activities to enable them to take part.

Their wild spaces were areas close to their school. They engaged with them through listening – to twigs snapping and the scraping of gravel – and by feeling how they moved through mud. They experienced the wind using kites, streamers and a parachute. They worked out where the wind was coming from and felt it on their faces. They used these experiences to create a multi-sensory map to share their unique way of experiencing nature with others.

The youngsters put something back into their wild spaces too. They picked up litter and looked at how long it would take to biodegrade and helped to maintain a pond. Now they have passed on their experiences of accessing wild places by wheelchair in order to improve accessibility for other people.

Their teachers, Gavin Taylor and Cath Herrod, say the programme was varied and flexible enough to include everyone: "It allowed access to a range of activities while maintaining the core messages of appreciation, empathy, exploration and conservation."

Experiencing the wind. Photo: New Bridge Learning Centre

Experiencing the wild boosts physical, emotional and mental well-being.

Walking into the wild changes lives

Above: Looking over Loch Lomond. Right: Cheers all round as their goal is achieved. Photos: 'Discovery Quest'

Men and women in Norfolk with severe and enduring mental illness have been working toward the John Muir Award as part of their treatment under an innovative six-month walking therapy project. Paul Levefer, a mental health nurse who manages the Discovery Quest project, says: "We took 12 people with a variety of mental health problems on an expedition which literally changed their lives. The benefits to people taking part have been unbelievable."

The project uses the John Muir Award to stimulate an awareness of the environment. Participants explored wild places in Norfolk, Derbyshire and Scotland and four of them have achieved their Explorer Awards. A further 60 people have signed up for the therapy this year which will include climbing Ben Nevis and spending time in Knoydart.

Paul Lefever adds: "There is increasing evidence of the beneficial effect that regular contact with nature and wild spaces can have on our physical, emotional and mental well-being."

The project is supported by a number of organisations including the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, MountainWise and Norfolk & Waveney Mental Health Foundation Trust.

Listening to messages from the forest

Cedar House in Cumbria is a residential school for children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. In 2006 it started using the John Muir Award to provide students with a nationally recognised certificate as well as valuable work experience.

For their Discovery Awards, students Shane and Megan explored a network of paths and mountain bike trails in Grizedale Forest, helping to maintain way-markers and footpaths. This gave them an opportunity to get their hands dirty while talking about the feelings they had while immersed in nature. Visiting the site every week throughout the seasons, they experienced the forest in all weather conditions. "The forest talks a lot," says Shane. "I like to listen to what it says."

Moving on to their Explorer Awards, the pair focused on an area of forest where deer impact is monitored. They learned about woodland management, tree identification, and how to thin and space trees to encourage the woodland ecosystem. In the process they learned to use and maintain a variety of tools. This pleased Megan: "I like using tools: pens I struggle with."

Their teacher says that the group likes getting to grips with hands-on work. "It gives immediate results, is long-lasting and tangible. It is something they can put their name on and also something that will last."

Megan and Shane have gained in confidence since starting their Award journey. Shane addressed a large audience at Cumbria's John Muir Award Gathering and both shared their Award experiences at a local old people's home. They are now planning to create a wildlife garden at the home as part of their Conserver Award.

The John Muir Award in Cumbria is hosted by Cumbria Youth Alliance. Cedar House students have been supported by school staff and Mark Birchall of the Forestry Commission.

AN IDEAL AWARD FOR ALL GROUPS

Several characteristics of the John Muir Award enable it to reach out to excluded groups:

- It's **flexible** - in terms of activity undertaken and time frames for involvement, and can therefore accommodate chaotic lifestyles and other support needs.
- It's **accessible** - it's free: activity can be local. A focus on active experience means that reports, exams and academic knowledge aren't necessary for achievement. Bureaucracy and jargon are kept to a minimum for all concerned.
- It provides a **structure** which can be used to enhance established programmes and give **focus.**
- It's **challenging yet achievable**. Activity is appropriate to individual participants; completion gives a sense of achievement. Personal achievement and recognition are often rare for those from excluded backgrounds.
- The Award's **Regional Managers** have a key role. They seek to understand the participating organisation's aims and culture and identify ways in which the Award can contribute to what it is trying to achieve.

→ **www.johnmuiraward.org**

Wild Writing Competition winners 2009

Seven ways of looking at Suilven

TOM BRYAN

Words may not be enough. The great poet Norman MacCaig tried. The Gaels tried. The Vikings tried. 'Sul-fjall', the Pillar Mountain. Suilven, the 'sugar loaf'. Edwin Muir said Suilven did not appear to belong to our world at all. Wainwright, the often dour and crusty mountain chronicler, nearly gets poetic: "Suilven never fails to shock and surprise the beholder."

I first saw Suilven the first year I saw Scotland, as primroses still lay like bits of broken moon on the Sutherland hillside. I had hitched a ride with an elderly English couple. As we approached the mountain, having come via the old ferry at Kylesku, they pulled into the lay-by and just stared. They had just been shocked and surprised, as Wainwright said they would. As I was.

The summer passed and a hard winter passed. Ireland. Germany. Holland. My Wanderjahr. However, I was back in Scotland in April, with winter refusing to budge while colliding with an impatient spring. My wife-to-be and I went up Suilven on Easter Day. We weren't able to buy food but we had water a'plenty. Suilven crouched like King Kong over a sleeping Lochinver. We hiked in via Glencanisp, quicker but much harder on the walker where Suilven is always in sight, teasing, beckoning. It was a cold day and we were barely dressed for it. Like many other starving pilgrims, we would need to balance between reverence and practicality. We had to get up and down the mountain before dark. Clouds rolled in, skies darkened, the sun shot down its Biblical rays. Lochs looked like tar pools in a fickle light, but the cloud lifted and we saw the Outer Hebrides. We got down just before dark, just before snow, starving yet exhilarated. We had a pint and a Kit Kat in the Culag Bar just before closing time. The pilgrims had done it the hard way.

I later moved to the Highlands and was privileged to view Suilven every day in all its guises. In snow and bracken, in golden broom and primrose. My next hikes up Suilven took me via the Falls of Kirkaig, where great salmon must fail the impossible leap before falling back into quieter spawning pools. It is a long walk round Fionn Loch, dappled by lovely brown trout rising to the surface. Then Suilven finally presents a saddle to you and you accept.

I've taken folk up Suilven who have perhaps missed the point. Most times, it is best to forget that sugar loaf, that pillar, that strange saddled creature changing from purple to grey, from black to green. Study the slow worm, the buzzard, the eagle, the primrose and the ptarmigan. And MacCaig was right: Suilven's myriad frogs are golden.

One hot day, I sat by one of Suilven's many pools. I took off my rucksack, stuck my face in my cupped hands for a drink . . . and not more than arm's length away, a lumpy adder was doing more or less the same thing. We were both hot, craving a drink. You will never drink alone up there. Meadow pipits, greenshank, the eerie sound of the stonechat, like a ghost mocking our footsteps on the slipping stones. Suilven, in fact, burbles with life. Butterwort, tormentil, saxifrage. Insects are being eaten by both plant and animal, whilst frogs gorge themselves on clegs and midges, which gorge themselves on our blood, and so it goes. So if you're going into Suilven, you'll probably go via Glencanisp from Lochinver, or via the Falls of Kirkaig and Fionn Loch. But there are other ways.

I was born at La Fourche, Winnipeg, where French Voyageurs and Hudson's Bay fur trappers learned how to navigate the fur trapping routes where the Red River meets the Assinibione, before opening up the waters of Lake Winnipeg or the great streams of the western prairies and Rocky Mountain foothills. These early Canadians, learning from its aboriginal peoples, canoed the wilderness and the continent. This beng in my blood, I portaged my Canadian canoe past the old graveyard at Elphin, the Gaelic letters on the weathered stones telling other indigenous tales. I paddled past the Garlic Island, following the line of that most crooked loch whose Gaelic name itself means 'crooked', Cam. I camped at the end of Cam Loch, then walked into Suilven through clouds of clegs and midges, until a breeze blew them away. I stayed on the mountain until dark, descending by the light of the full moon, in a near-freezing wind.

Later, I carried my light canoe around the fish farm at Veyatie and canoed down that narrow sliver, until it eases into the Fionn Loch. I caught a few lovely brown trout, frying and eating

1st prize

Tom Bryan was born in Canada but has long been resident in Scotland. He lives in Kelso. He is a widely-published poet and writer of fiction and non-fiction.

THE WINNERS

1st prize:

Seven ways of looking at Suilven - Tom Bryan, Kelso

2nd prize:

Deer path - Alan Gay, North Berwick

Runners up:

Oldshoremore - Kate Blackadder, Edinburgh

All exhilaration - Stephen Busby, Findhorn

The climb - Jenny Holden, Onich

Winners of the Gaelic section:

Doilleireachd an T-Sleibhe - Neil McRae, Kilbride, Skye

Runners up:

Tearlach Quinell, Inverness

Derek Mackay, Glasgow

The judges were Hamish MacDonald, playwright, novelist and Director at Moniack Mhor, Scotland's writing centre, and writer and teacher Linda Cracknell. "The entries took us to wild places all over Scotland, Britain and the world," commented Linda. "The winners for me were personal, immediate and poetic with a touch of mystery in the landscapes and the human responses they portrayed."

Tom Bryan's prize is a place on a writing course at Moniack Mhor.

them from my billycan with my Swiss army knife, followed by a quaff from a clear burn. Suilven was shoved tight up against the tent. Adders lined my approach to it.

I've been up Suilven five times. The sixth was in a long meditative poem, yet unpublished, about a man of 50 who spends the night before the Millennium on the mountain, pondering his death and its death, for we forget that Suilven is wasting away in a cosmic geological anorexia. It was once 10 times the size it is now, dwarfing all the mountains of the world. Yet it will one day be eroded into the very lochs where I caught my morning trout. We forget that mountains die too, only not on our terms.

Seven is of course a totemic number. The Stages of Man. The Pillars of Wisdom. The Seven Year Itch. I look at my bloated middle aged body with much dismay. I probably couldn't make it even a third of the way up the mountain without huffing and puffing, without an inhaler, or perhaps a stroke or a heart attack.

But perhaps there is a seventh way. According to Hindu thought, a man must grow, raise a family, work in his community, and then finally take to the road in the final seventh stage of his life as a mendicant, a wise man. Having trained physically and mentally, I dream I would take what little I need and walk in my own time. I would approach the mountain like a penitent. I would perhaps truly see the adder for the first time, in its struggle for food, for mating, for life itself. I would watch the cleg feed on my own blood, the frog eat the cleg, the adder eat the frog. I would also remember that Ewan McColl has his ashes scattered here.

Then, like the Taoist sage Lao Tzu, I must tell my life's tale to a mythical gatekeeper before he will allow me that final passage into a hidden valley. According to legend, the traveller Lao Tzu simply disappeared, leaving all his precious Taoist writings with the border guard. But disappearance is not extinction, for to vanish is to elude time itself, which is what mountains teach us.

2nd prize

Alan Gay has climbed all his life and now sails his five-ton cutter among the islands of Scotland and abroad. He is well-published and has several poetry collections.

Deer path

ALAN GAY

Off the hill late, exhausted, lost,
minds doped beginning to float,
we crossed into a hidden corrie
leaving the sun perched on the rim.

Silent burns probed hidden chasms
where ravens cawed and shifted
with the dry scrape wings.

The upper slopes were streaked
with queues of slow moving deer.
We went straight through their lines:
could have touched them.

Then they were gone,
brushed into the bare hillside.

A solitary stag remained
gashed by bars of light,
frozen in the moment before it too
entered the hill.
They left behind a feint scent
and the put-a-put of hooves.

The ravens cawed
and jagged shadows dropped
from the corries rim to claw
the uneven ground, until
in the gloom we stumbled on a path
sudden and perfect
puddled with the print of many deer.

But it died after a hundred paces
leaving us bewildered,
in doubt of our senses,
as though we had encroached.

The path seemed to come
from a plane of existence not our own,
to touch for a moment then return;
the deer quietly moving between
coming and going like ghosts.

Suilven. Photographer: John Cleare

WRITE NOW FOR THE 2010 COMPETITION

The John Muir Trust is encouraging both aspiring and professional writers to pen stories with the broad theme 'experiences in wild places' for the 2010 Wild Writing Competition. The competition is free and open to all and there are prose, poetry, Gaelic and children's categories. The deadline is 18 January 2010 and entries should not exceed 1200 words.

For more details, contact Sarah Lewis on 01397 705049 or visit:

→ **www.jmt.org/writing-competition.asp**

'Member number 5' remembered for his passionate defence and promotion of wild places.

Farewell to Irvine: a "true champion for wild places"

"Irvine shall live on in the mountains always." Photographer: John Cleare

Making my way along a busy pavement in Perth, my eye just had time to make out the redoubtable figure of Irvine Butterfield before his robust Yorkshire voice boomed out: "And what about the sheep on Schiehallion?" It was not the usual greeting one would expect from friends, but it was very much in line with Irvine, a passionate supporter of the John Muir Trust and all its work.

What had vexed him was that he had just been on the mountain and spotted that some sheep had wandered on, although amicable arrangements had been made to take sheep off the Trust's part of the mountain to reduce grazing pressure and help natural regeneration. But the sheep were clearly on Irvine's mind when he spotted me. The reaction of passing members of the public was something to behold.

I tell this story because it says so much about Irvine who ate, breathed and slept thinking about mountains. As a Trustee of the John Muir Trust, he worked tirelessly to help bring Schiehallion under the Trust's guardianship and he cared so personally about the way it was managed. He was anxious that the mountain be brought back to good health and he was determined that the Trust would do the right thing.

Irvine brought great humour and cheerfulness to discussions during his term as a Trustee and to the Schiehallion local group. One of his proudest moments as a Trustee was when he stood up at Kinloch Rannoch to propose the ancient toast, 'The Back of Schiehallion,' at the handover ceremony for the mountain.

He had a particular place in his heart for the Trust of which he was member number 5. But he also gave hugely of himself to the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, the Munro Society of which he was Patron, the campaign (ultimately successful) to have the Cairngorm National Park boundary extended to include the northern Perthshire hills, and to many other bodies. He brought the same passion and commitment to them all and became a most outstanding and remarkable advocate for our wild places.

Irvine Butterfield
8 August 1936 - 12 May 2009

His books, including the classic *Magic of the Munros* and *The Call of the Corbetts*, struck a chord not only with those who venture to those sublime summits but to a far wider audience who could see the stunning beauty of these wild places and be convinced of the need for them to be cared for and cherished, not just for this and future generations but for their own sake.

Irvine donated significant book royalties to the John Muir Trust, an act that was very humbling to his colleagues who knew he was not a man of substantial means. It was a truly generous act on the part of a truly passionate man. He also gave talks the length and breadth of Britain where he supported the aims and work of the Trust and encouraged others to join.

In his final weeks Irvine mustered the strength to attend a ceremony at the Dundee Mountain Film Festival where he was presented with the Trust's Lifetime Achievement Award. It was a very emotional ceremony. Irvine was very ill but his courage shone through as he spoke of his great love of the mountains.

The warmth of the reception he was given there "among his ain folk" and visible feelings shown by the many, many people who attended his funeral in Perth only weeks later, showed the very special place Irvine had in the hearts of those who love the Scottish mountains.

Irvine was a true champion for wild places – and the mountains and those he met are the better for it.

Is there something missing from the Scottish mountains these days? Certainly. But Irvine has a special place in the memories of those who knew and loved him. For them, Irvine shall live on in the mountains always. ⌜⌟

Nigel Hawkins

Enthusiastic campaigner who fought to save Glen Affric from power developers.

I Return to Scotland

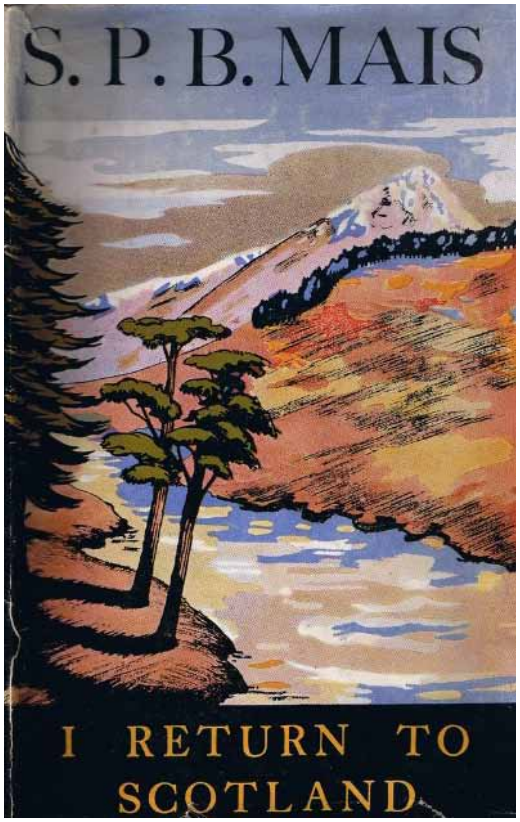
by Stuart Petre Brodie Mais

Introduced by Matthew Justin Busbridge

"We live in a curious age. On every side [they are] acquiring and exerting more and more... powers to utilise land ... to generate electric power. No one would protest against the use of land and water for any scheme that would bring more and cheaper electric power within the reach of us all, but we have a right to demand that such schemes should entail as little spoliation of natural beauty as possible, and we have so far had no proof that the... electric scheme promoters have paid sufficient attention to the protests."

So wrote Stuart Petre Brodie Mais in 1947 in his book, *I Return to Scotland*. He continued: "It is quite obviously not easy to make our rulers realise that to many of us it is a matter of desperate importance to keep our loveliness inviolate. Without vision the nation perishes, and vision is only kept alive by the presence of beauty... More than ever it is necessary to cherish every scrap of beauty that remains."

Mais had just returned from the Second World War: "the long, dour, exhausting struggle to preserve our freedom that remorselessly stole six of the best years of our lives". Now he was writing about another fight, to prevent hydro-electric dams in Glen Affric: "I view therefore with a good deal of perturbation any proposals... [that] will inevitably mar the wild loveliness of this superb glen with dams and pipes and overhead cables and pylons. There seems to be no reason why all the loveliest pleasances in the British Isles should not quickly become a mesh of wires, as unlovely and metropolitan as Clapham Junction." His words remain as relevant today in the context of on-shore windfarms and their associated power lines.



Stuart Petre Brodie Mais, or SPB, or Petre as he was known, was a prolific writer and broadcaster. Born in 1885, his heyday was in the 1930s and 1940s when his wireless broadcasts and more than 200 books were received expectantly by an audience only slowly coming to enjoy the idea of leisure, taking to the countryside and hills on foot, by train or the new motorcar. *I Return to Scotland* is as much a guidebook and travelogue for that generation. It is not the best writing you will come across, full of hanging paragraphs, non-sequiturs and opinion. Anecdotal tales are related as if factual. Enthusiasm sometimes descends into rambling confusion. SPB betrays his high social connections and the paternalism of his class, and his writing would benefit from an editor's firm blue pencil. However, for all that, it is a fascinating insight into a Scotland where most travel was still by public transport and the road network north of Perth was rudimentary.

Where nowadays we would drive, SPB describes taking the steamer from Tarbert, along the loch to Rowerdennan, from where he tackles the slopes of Ben Lomond. Or the train journey from Inverness ("no journey in the British Isles [is] comparable to this for variety and grandeur"), to Achnasheen where you transfer to a "motor-coach" waiting to take you to Ullapool. And it is by this route that we reach what SPB describes as "the finest scenery in all Scotland, that of Slioch, Ben Eighe and north to Suilven, Quineg (sic), and Assynt – a whole succession of isolated mountains that look like prehistoric monsters crouching under the clouds". It is in his writing of the wild parts of Scotland that the author is most accessible, writing of a landscape that is still recognisable, his words enjoyable for their currency rather than merely historical interest.

SPB Mais on top of the NBC building in New York while recording radio broadcasts in the 1930s. This picture was originally published in *An Unrepentant Englishman: The Life of SPB Mais, Ambassador of the Countryside* by Maisie Robson, published by Kings England Press.

SPB died in 1975, aged 90, almost unnoticed in his passing. He is now largely forgotten, but his writing on the importance of preserving wilderness for its own sake is even more pertinent today:

> "HERE, IF ANYWHERE, ONE FEELS ON TOP OF THE WORLD. HERE IF ANYWHERE ONE GETS THE SENSE OF PERFECT FREEDOM. HERE IF ANYWHERE THE TIRED WORKER IN SEARCH OF THAT QUIETUDE AND RESPITE FROM THE MADDING CROWD MAY GAIN REFRESHMENT AND RENEWED STRENGTH FOR THE BATTLE."

THE REVIEWER

■ Justin Busbridge lives and works in the Outer Hebrides, kayaks, walks, cycles and sails, and strives to protect this incredible environment so it remains a place of renewal for everyone.

NEXT TIME

■ **The Classic Text being revisited in the next Journal will be the Cairngorm writings of Seton Gordon, revisited by Hamish Brown.**

Nature's Beloved Son: Rediscovering John Muir's Botanical Legacy

by Bonnie J Gisel with images by Stephen J Joseph

Reviewed by Fiona Russell

Think of this large book as akin to a luxurious cake and you won't be far wrong. The hardback presentation in a pale green cotton cover with an inlaid image of one of the plants collected by Muir is just for starters. The recipe combines the scholarly approach of Bonnie Gisel with 150 botanical images, taken and manipulated by Stephen Joseph, from the herbaria in which Muir deposited his many finds collected during his travels across North America.

As an environmental historian and John Muir specialist, Gisel recounts the love that John Muir had for plants and his letter to Jean Carr about the *Calypso borealis* that launched his writing career.

Muir had a compulsion to collect species throughout his life and kept countless notebooks on his finds. Muir used a lot of information from his notes for his writings, showing that he was both inspired and expressive about his love of botany and the environments in which he found specimens.

One finds the Muir that is familiar while elsewhere Muir is a revelation to the reader. Muir says of his autumn and winter spent at Fountain Lake: "In my walks to and from fieldwork and in occasional rambles I searched every inch of ground for botanical specimens." He then describes his leaving of Wisconsin University as "leaving for the University of the Wilderness".

Project photographer Stephen Joseph encountered several problems in capturing the specimens for this book. He initially used a digital camera only to find the resolution too disappointing for the desired quality. He finally used an Epson flatbed scanner. These scans produced enormous files which he could then edit using Adobe Photoshop. Many of the specimens were not in good condition as a result of their travels and their age. Joseph's use of artistic licence to recreate any missing parts of plants is something that he thinks "Muir would have approved of". The resultant images are stunning.

This lavish over-sized book is rounded off with a botanical bibliography, a lengthy bibliography relating to John Muir and a comprehensive index. The prints are a breathtaking feast for the eyes and the words by Gisel convey the passion that Muir had not only for botany but for all aspects of the natural world.

Heyday Books, Jan 2009 £35 Hardback ISBN 978-1-59714-106-2

(A paperback edition is scheduled for spring 2010.)

Photographer: Dave Walker

Call of the Eagle

by Dave Walker

Reviewed by Dick Balharry

Dave Walker has, through prodigious efforts over 30 years, produced priceless, systematic observations that have resulted in *Call of the Eagle*. This book will help more people appreciate and understand the behaviour of a magnificent bird that possesses symbolic importance.

A glimpse of the soaring silhouette of this great raptor can be the highlight of a hiker's day. However, the importance and value of the eagle as a biological indicator for wild lands cannot be stressed enough.

Although much of the book concentrates on recording the English eagles, their successes and failures, Dave's thirst for knowledge takes him into Scotland where he again demonstrates all the skills required for recording, but always giving the eagle's interests priority.

The author's observations of eagle activity outside the breeding period are particularly valuable, for despite advances in telemetry (radio tracking) we are largely ignorant of the movements of immature birds or, indeed, the breeding success of individual birds. Dave's accomplishments in recognising individual birds are remarkable. The author makes it clear that he is not a "trained scientist" yet his careful and detailed observations of wild life activities replicate precisely what a good behavioural scientist would be proud of.

Underlying much of the text there is an anxiety expressed regarding people; his employers, colleagues and other users of the countryside. These are all serious issues that tend to make observational work undertaken by the motivated individual even more difficult. For me it was also a distraction from the main subject.

Our wild lands and the wildlife they support need the talents displayed by Dave, communicating his experiences to a wider audience. *Call of the Eagle* is a timely publication and all of us need to question why, in a modern and relatively affluent society, we could be failing to maintain eagle country for the benefit of eagles and people.

Whittles Publishing, 2009 £16.99 ISBN: 978-1-904445-82-1

Left: Northern Primrose *Primula borealis* collected by Muir at Point Hope, Alaska 1884. By permission of Heyday Books.

Artists intruding on nature branded "intrusive, hubristic. and even arrogant."

Take your art home with you!

JOHN PURSER

'Globe on Canisp'. Photographer: Alan P Scott

As a composer/poet and occasional sculptor, I am fierce in defence of the arts - indeed have devoted my entire life to them. So how we see and how we want to see our environment are both of fundamental interest to me. It is in these contexts that I find myself increasingly concerned by the promotion of 'environmental art' and its effect upon the landscape.

It is relevant to note that I am currently involved in a research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council entitled 'Uinneag dhan Àird an Iar – Window to the West.' This is a joint project between Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the University of Dundee and is working "towards a redefinition of the visual within Gaelic Scotland". While I should emphasise that there is a wide diversity of opinion within the project, and that what I write here is a personal view, the project has provided a welcome opportunity for me to think about issues of art and environment.

Sculpture and artificial lakes and grottoes have a fine history in the world of landscape gardening, and I can take great pleasure in many commissioned works of art in managed landscape. But when it comes to making gestures that have some permanence in our less managed landscapes, then the ideal of leaving no footprint strikes me as being seriously compromised. It is impossible to leave no footprint, of course. I, and a thousand others, have badly eroded the upper ridges of Blaven in the 40 years I have been climbing it. I did once climb it barefoot but confess to putting on my boots for the descent.

But while we do our best not to leave a footprint, and clear up the litter louts' litter, we seem ready enough to countenance an artist like Lotte Glob leaving 111 ceramic stones at 111 lochans to "begin their own stories" (Journal 45, p23). Might that not reasonably be described as littering the landscape? And to what end? Might not I feel equally entitled to scatter a few poems, cut into stone, around another 111 lochans, or leave them on mountain tops to "begin their own stories"? And if I, with a track record in the arts, might be so entitled, then so would hundreds of others. And what of those who might quite reasonably think that a qualification gives you no special entitlement and who wish to express their deep inner sympathies with nature by leaving their own marks here and there?

Neist Point on Skye is now visually impaired by a plethora of little stone towers built by tourists following the making of the film *Breaking the Waves*: a similar site has developed at the bealach between Invergarry and the road from Inverness to Cluanie, prompted by I know not what, but simply a visual mess at a beautiful spot. The Trust recently, and, in my view, rightly and sensitively, removed memorial cairns and signs from the top of Ben Nevis to an appropriate site. Might one not as reasonably ask Andy Goldsworthy to remove his arches from hilltops in Dumfriessshire, whether they were commissioned or no?

When Ian Hamilton Finlay created Stonypath Garden, he did so on his own land and without any major intrusion upon the view of the landscape as a whole. It is a beautiful place, beautifully conceived and carried out, but fundamentally modest. I have previously admired Andy Goldsworthy's work in photographic form, knowing that it has been otherwise impermanent. Much of it was beautiful and thoughtful. But his "three hilltop sandstone arches, designed to encourage public access to Cairnhead Forest and Glen" (as reported in SNH's *The Nature of Scotland*, Autumn 2008) are 12 feet high and visible from a distance. They aren't going to melt in the sun or blow away in the wind: so that's three hilltops I don't want to visit and that are likely to be spoilt for me from several other viewpoints. If this is what it takes to encourage the public to visit, then one has to ask why encourage them in the first place?

Artists have their own sites already in the form of galleries, formal and semi-formal gardens, and through purchasers of their works. For them to appropriate nature and leave their mark upon it strikes me as intrusive, hubristic and even arrogant. If this movement towards interaction with 'the wild' gathers pace, more and more precedents will be set and we will be entering a 21st-century equivalent of the 18th-century taming of nature. That would have the opposite effect to what such works usually claim – namely a oneness with 'the wild'.

I would be interested to hear the views of other members on this subject – you see I have this notion of carving a 50-metre-high statue of Cuchullin at the outflow from Loch Coruisk, using the native gabbro. I'm just the person to do it, being a local resident - and my empathy with the place is so profound that I intend to write a lengthy neo-romantic, revisionist, aesthetic justification of the proposal which will pass muster at any committee meeting. Trust me. I am an artist. ⌜⌟

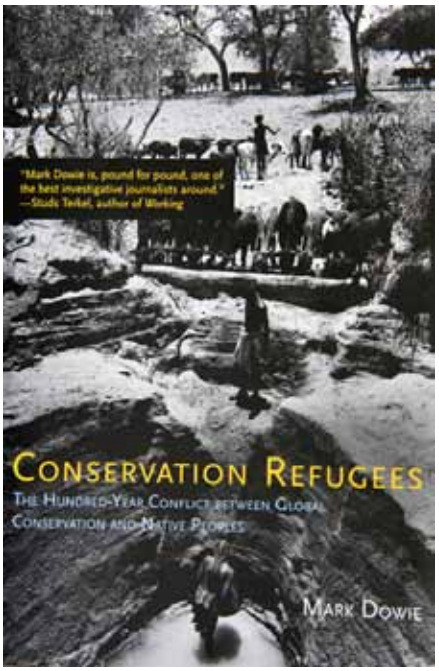
■ John Purser is a Research Fellow at Sabhal Mor Ostaig.

Conservationists must recognise credentials of indigenous people to look after their lands.

Refugees from green imperialism

SUE HOPKINSON

My attention was drawn to the book, *Conservation Refugees*, by a newspaper article by its author, Mark Dowie, in which he summarised his study of global conservation in the context of conflict: firstly the struggle by transnational conservation organisations to protect nature and preserve biological diversity in the face of rapacious extractive industries, and, secondly, what he describes as the more lamentable conflict between conservationists and the world-wide movement of indigenous people - "the story of good guy versus good guy".



This struck a particular chord as I had taken exception to a passage in Alastair Mcintosh's article 'Wilderness near the end of heaven' (Journal 46), in which he explored the sensitive subject of divisions between the indigenous and incomer populations of the Highlands and Islands. I felt that the emotive language Alastair used to rehearse the worst arguments against incomers, despite a token gesture towards those who "come to share and not to take", was not conducive to good community relations, particularly when he accused us of jaundicing the very notion and nature of environmentalism. He unhelpfully describes incomers as guests abusing their hosts' hospitality, speculating in what they "rudely" call property and often being "loud, pushy, patronising and colonising". Not exactly a balanced view!

Mark Dowie's book was the perfect antidote for my irritation. It is a closely argued study of the rise of the global conservation movement and its role in dispossessing indigenous people of their land in the interests of protecting wilderness and enhancing biodiversity. He studies the inevitable clash between two powerful causes, the need to protect and enhance a dwindling global resource and the need to respect the rights and livelihoods of the people involved, and comes to the conclusion that progress can be measured by the extent to which both sides develop sensitivity and tolerance and learn to use each other as a resource.

Dowie traces the development of 'exclusionary conservation' or 'the Yosemite model' in which indigenous people have been displaced from their land as alleged enemies of conservation. John Muir comes in for a share of the blame for insisting that the Yosemite Valley had been unoccupied virgin wilderness before the arrival of Euro-American settlers, whereas anthropologists were already establishing that it was a tended wilderness occupied by Indians for four thousand years.

Much of the book is taken up with an apparently amazing success story as the BINGOs (Big International Non Governmental Organisations) made the running. Powerful American-based organisations such as the Nature Conservancy, Conservation International and the Worldwide Fund for Nature, increasingly modelled on, and funded by, big business corporations, now have a role in setting up and running national parks and protected areas world wide resulting in over 12 per cent of all land,18.8 million square kilometers, coming under conservation protection.

But what of the indigenous people? Excluded from their nomadic pastures or their traditional hunting and farming grounds, many have been settled on the fringes of their former homes. Embittered by poverty and broken promises, some have taken to raiding what they regard as their homeland. Others, equipped with guns, motor vehicles and chain saws by Europeans, have participated in the destruction of virgin forest and the slaughter of wild animals. In the meantime, the BINGOs have steered a difficult path between the conservation aims they exist to promote and the corporations, on whom they financially depend, who demand the 'sustainable' extraction of minerals and extensive logging opportunities. 'Greenwash' is often the order of the day.

The good news is that attitudes are changing. There is a new respect for the skills of tribal people practised in sustainable development over the centuries, more knowledgeable than university-trained specialists in the flora and fauna of their homeland. Eminent anthropologists now argue that these could well be the best conservationists we have. For their part, indigenous groups on every continent have realised that the best way to avoid displacement from new protected areas is to form their own Indigenous Reserves or Community Conservation Areas. They are now a force to be reckoned with as they share the burden of concern for our planet and make their own sustained contribution to conservation.

Conservation Refugees is a very good read, forensic in its analysis, occasionally bogged down in detail, but written with a passion that we share in the John Muir Trust to protect our natural heritage while not shortchanging the people who live and work on our properties. The author's exposure of the so-called 'Wilderness Myth' as a driver of the conservation agenda offers a challenge that you need to read the book to explore. ⌜⌟

**Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples* by Mark Dowie. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. RRP £18.85 ISBN 978-0-262-01261-4

■ Sue Hopkinson is a John Muir Trust Trustee and founder member of 'Highlands Before Pylons'. She has lived in Ullapool since 1994 and hosted many meetings of the Southern Members Group at Stonar School.

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NEXT ISSUE

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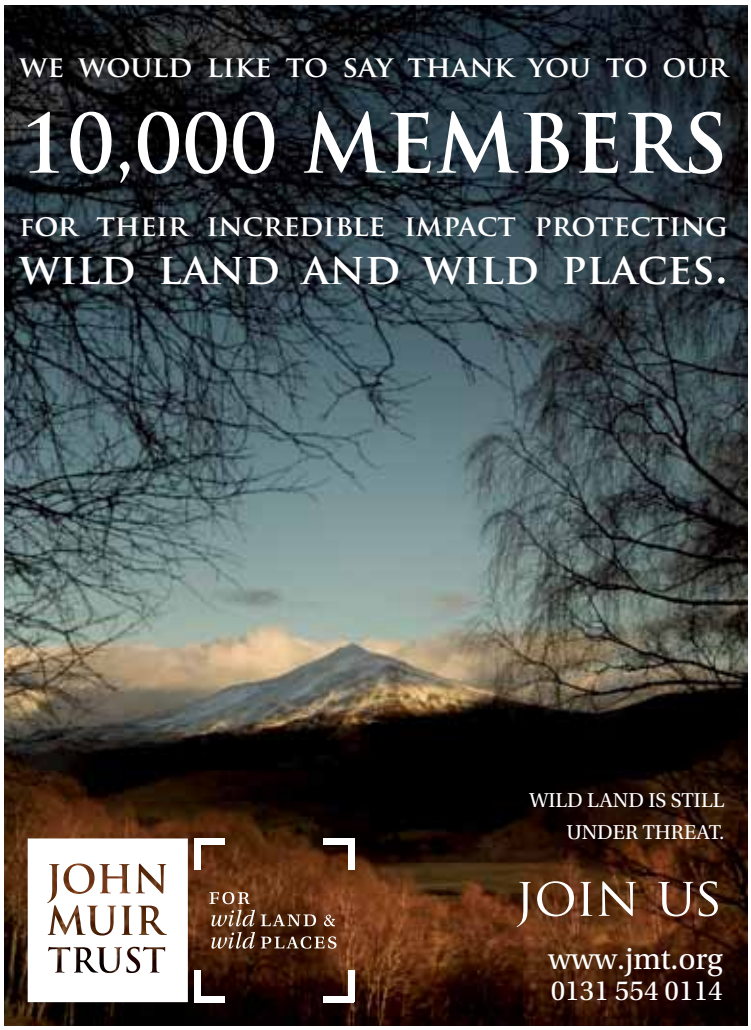

THE JOHN MUIR TRUST

The John Muir Trust is the UK's leading wild land conservation charity. The Trust owns and safeguards eight iconic areas of wild land including parts of Ben Nevis, the Red Cuillin in Skye, Schiehallion, Quinag and Sandwood Bay. The Trust works closely with the communities on its own land and with the community bodies that own and manage land in Knoydart, North Harris and Assynt. For more information, visit www.jmt.org

The John Muir Trust campaigns against threats to wild land and for wild places to be valued by society.

The John Muir Trust encourages people to experience wild places and to 'put something back' through the John Muir Award. For more information, visit www.johnmuiraward.org

The Trust takes its name from the Scot, John Muir, one of the pioneers of the modern conservation movement. Born in 1838 in Dunbar, East Lothian, John Muir emigrated as a child to America. He went on to find fame as a botanist, geologist, mountaineer and pioneer of what is now called ecology. He successfully campaigned for the establishment of National Parks to safeguard wild lands such as Yosemite Valley in California.

JOURNAL 47 AUTUMN 09

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