

JOHN MUIR TRUST

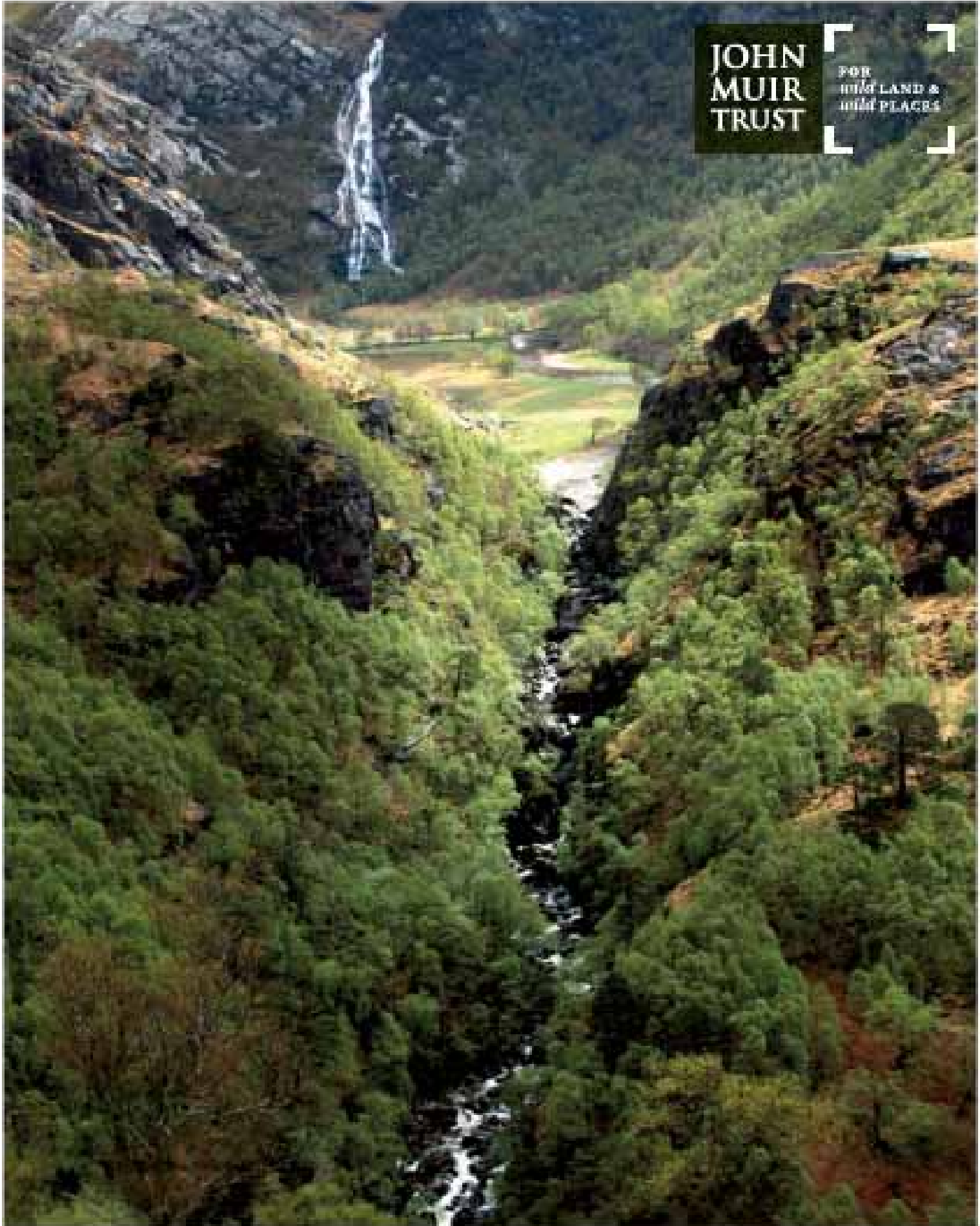
# JOURNAL

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JOHN  
MUIR  
TRUST

FOR  
WILD LAND &  
WILD PLACES



THROUGH GLEN SLIGACHAN TO THE STORM SWEEP  
SLOPES OF MARSCO. LET YOUR IMAGINATION  
WANDER, TREK AND CLIMB THROUGH THE LANDS  
IN YOUR CARE TO THE RUGGED PEAKS OF BLA BHEINN  
AND THE CULLIN.

FOR WILD LAND AND WILD PLACES  
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Welcome to the new look John Muir Trust Journal which has been developed, along with other Trust publications, thanks to major donor support. In these pages, we aim to reflect the Trust's commitment to conserving, campaigning and inspiring as it strives to ensure that wild land is protected and wild places valued.

Front cover: The Water of Nevis plunges through Steall Gorge and its remnant of ancient Caledonian pine forest on John Muir Trust land in Upper Glen Nevis. The rugged crags of Meall Cumhann, Steall Falls and Steall Meadows provide an inspiring backdrop. (Photo: Alex Gillespie)

The John Muir Trust is the leading wild land conservation charity in the UK. Working with people and communities to conserve, campaign and inspire, the John Muir Trust is a membership organisation that seeks to ensure that wild land is protected and that wild places are valued by and for everyone.

[www.jmt.org](http://www.jmt.org)



# Foreword from the Chief Executive

I think my first words in the John Muir Trust Journal should be to pay tribute to my predecessor, Nigel Hawkins, who leaves a vibrant organisation full of potential. As you may appreciate, I have only just taken over the reins so I thought it might be best to introduce myself and explain a little about what makes me tick and how we might go forward together.

My last post was Director of Conservation for the Scottish Wildlife Trust, an organisation that I was with for 15 years and will continue to hold dear to my heart. SWT shares many of the same values and ambitions as the John Muir Trust and prides itself in working with people to secure a better future for Scottish wildlife.

At SWT I helped to shape their vision for the restoration of functioning ecosystems. I think that it is incredibly important to have a clear, shared vision for our future environment when we live in such uncertain times. Governments all over the world are now recognising the full breadth and significance of public benefits through ecosystem goods and services, such as clean air and water, carbon fixing and climate regulation or improvements to our nation's health and spiritual wellbeing through enjoyment of our wonderful wild places. The John Muir Trust can have a vital role in helping to shape this future where we might find a better balance between the needs of people and the environment and to bring some of these previously intangible benefits into the real economy.

Although I come to you with a background in nature conservation, my philosophy is influenced much

more by my training as a geographer at Newcastle University. It was there that I was introduced to the wonders of peat bogs as small hidden gems within the vast Kielder Forest and the true wilderness of our Sutherland Flows. This interest has taken me to some wonderful places around the world, from the tropical swamp forests of Borneo to the Russian tundra. These are truly wild places to be cherished and conserved. Fortunately we don't need to travel half way round the world to experience some of these values. I recently visited a small lowland raised bog on the outskirts of Glasgow. Surrounded by woodland, this place had not changed significantly for over 7,000 years. I can't imagine many places where you could experience that sense of wild beauty within ten minutes of our largest city centre. Then again, perhaps beauty is in the eye of the beholder!

Something that really excites me about the John Muir Trust is the work we do through the John Muir Award to help educate, inspire and connect people with their environment. Being the father of three small children, I am conscious of the legacy we are leaving them and the responsibility that they will have in the future. John Muir Trust is a leader in this field and I think there is huge potential to help our growing urban population experience, appreciate and care for the fantastic wild places and wildlife on its doorstep.

My SWT background has made me very conscious of the value and benefits of working with partners and, most importantly, members. I certainly intend to get out and about and meet as many of you as possible, listen to your ideas and concerns, and work with you to continue to make the John Muir Trust a powerful voice in government, an inspiration to our children and an organisation of which you can be proud to be a member.

Stuart Brooks

I THINK THAT IT IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT TO HAVE A CLEAR, SHARED VISION FOR OUR FUTURE ENVIRONMENT WHEN WE LIVE IN SUCH UNCERTAIN TIMES.

STUART BROOKS



## John Muir and Robert Burns combine to welcome Homecomers

The first of the John Muir Odyssey events has opened at John Muir's Birthplace, Dunbar, to coincide with the 250th anniversary of Burns and the Homecoming initiative. The exhibition, 'Wherever a Scotsman goes... John Muir and Robert Burns', celebrates the culture and heritage of two of Scotland's great sons, comparing their background, childhood, love of sharing stories with others and similarities in writing style. The exhibition runs until 17 June.

Muir's journals and letters contain many references to Burns: "I have often thought how fine it would be to have the company of Burns. And indeed he was always with me, for I had him by heart." Muir also enjoyed sharing Burns with friends and family. On one famous occasion while in Yosemite Valley, he and several friends stayed up well into the night reciting and singing Burns. Their travelling companions were not amused! One of the ladies later referred

to the evening as a "debauch of poetry".

On Muir's own homecoming journey in 1893, he visited relatives in Dunbar before heading to Dumfries and Burns country. On his journey back to California he wrote to his cousins of how he had enjoyed their company, quoting Burns' *The Cotter's Saturday Night*: "From scenes like these Scotia's grandeur springs, that makes her loved at home, revered abroad."

The John Muir Odyssey is a programme of events which John Muir's Birthplace and the Scottish Seabird Centre are delivering in partnership for the Homecoming Scotland 2009 celebrations. These events are being part-financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community, Tyne Esk Leader and East Lothian Council.

To find out about all the John Muir Odyssey events visit [www.jmbt.org.uk](http://www.jmbt.org.uk) or call 01368 865899.



### US award for John Muir's Birthplace

John Muir's Birthplace has become the first transatlantic recipient of the John Muir Conservation Award for its work promoting the legacy of John Muir through its programme of exhibitions, children's workshops, talks, projects and events.

The 31st Annual John Muir Conservation Awards celebration took place in Martinez, California, in November. Jo Moulin, Manager of John Muir's Birthplace, gave a presentation about the work of the birthplace and collected the Nonprofit Conservation Award. East Lothian Council Leader David Berry took time out of a private visit to

San Francisco to attend the ceremony.

Jo Moulin said: "It was a great honour to receive this award from the John Muir Association in recognition of the hard work and enthusiasm of the team of staff and volunteers at John Muir's Birthplace. It was a great opportunity to further the strong relationships that exist between the birthplace and John Muir-related organisations in California. We look forward to reciprocating the warm welcome and hospitality we received in California back in Dunbar during the year of Homecoming."



John Muir exhibition and Jo Moulin with award (Photos: Glyn Satterley)

### Ben Nevis route potentially world's hardest

Dave MacLeod is one of the foremost climbers in the UK and one of the most accomplished all-round climbers in the world today. In 2006 he established the climb, Rhapsody, on Dumbarton Rock which, at a grade of E11 7a, was possibly the hardest traditional climbing route in the world at the time. Few thought that this would be eclipsed any time soon. However, on 28 July 2008, his first ascent of Echo Wall, high on the north face of Ben Nevis, brought another rise in world standards in traditional climbing. Although ungraded, Echo Wall is a strong contender for the world's hardest traditional rock climb. The film *Echo Wall* was winner of the Best Climbing Film and People's Choice Award at Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival. It follows Dave's preparation and attempts on the climb.

Dave takes up the story:

"I felt like I'd finally got it straight exactly what I enjoyed about hard routes. I no longer worried at all whether I'd be good enough to climb them, just enjoyed working hard on them and going climbing on them. I was really lucky

that during the time all this was dawning on me, I found the perfect project that fitted everything I was after – a massive prow on the top section of Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis called Echo Wall.

"I was looking for a route that would need a bit of everything - boldness, sport climbing fitness, mountaineering skill, commitment and some more besides. Echo Wall has all of these. I found, through bitter experience, that Ben Nevis is a hard taskmaster when it comes to completing new routes, summer or winter. I think that's why the climbers schooled here have developed such impressive climbing prowess to take to other places. It's a mountaineer's mountain. Nothing is straightforward – the approaches, climbs and descents are all part of the experience. It's a testing ground, and the majority of its climbing routes are high up, ending on, or near, the summit plateau.

"I first tried Echo Wall in 2006 and I knew then that I wasn't good enough to climb it. I'd need to go away and train and not bother it again until I really was ready.



"That took the best part of two years. I returned to Echo Wall in May 2008, much stronger and half a stone lighter. It worked! I could do the crux move straight away - a very satisfying feeling. I had predicted that the logistics of climbing a route of this level of difficulty so high on the Ben would be the greater part of the challenge, and so it proved. When I arrived in early May at the start of one of the precious two or three Scottish summer

high pressure systems, I was dismayed to find a huge bank of snow right above the line, melting gallons of water down the line. It would surely be there until early July. I had two choices - give up for 2008, or get digging. After a week of spadework, Echo Wall was free of snow and dry - and I was offered a job digging the foundations of the new CIC hut!"

→ [www.davemacleod.com](http://www.davemacleod.com)



### K10: Knoydart celebrates 10 years of community landownership!

In 2009 there will be an extensive programme of events celebrating the 10th anniversary of community landownership. These include guided walks and rambles through the wildlife and history of the area and conservation activities including an attempt to complete the removal of rhododendrons from Knoydart Foundation land.

For full details of the celebration programme visit

→ [www.knoydart-foundation.com](http://www.knoydart-foundation.com)

or contact Angela Williams, Development Manager at [angela@knoydart.org](mailto:angela@knoydart.org)

■ A review of Knoydart's first decade of community landownership will appear in the next edition of the Journal.

### Trust pilots accreditation scheme

The Trust's land management principles are well established on the land it manages through ownership and partnership. The Trust also has a commitment to try and influence land managed by others to the benefit of wild land. One way of doing this is through providing a practical but detailed description of what wild land management is (or should be) in the form of an accreditation scheme which would allow estates to be formally recognised for their sustainable wild land management.

The Trust has secured funding for a six-month pilot project to develop and test such a scheme. The pilot aims to develop clear guidance on minimum standards, best practice and accreditation criteria for the management of biodiversity, carbon, deer, forestry and woodland, livestock, recreation etc. Once guidance has been 'road tested' on the land the Trust manages, people from other conservation bodies, as well as public and private land managers, will be encouraged to try it. Ultimately, if the scheme is found to be useful, the project will identify costs and funding options for a full scale roll-out.

**Corrections to Journal 45:** In the review of Mike Cawthorne's *Wilderness Dreams*, the reference to 'Glendoe' accidentally emerged from the editing process as 'Glencoe'.

An article on recipients of the Trust's Lifetime Achievement Awards referred to Doug Scott as "the first Briton to reach the summit of Everest". He, in fact, succeeded along with the late Dougal Haston.

### People and wild places in print

In November 2009 Two Ravens Press, the publishing house based on Loch Broom, will publish an anthology of literary non-fiction focussing on the relationship between people and the wild places of the British Isles. The anthology will be edited by Linda Cracknell (a contributor to this Journal, see page 25). Contributions should be of no more than 8,000 words and the deadline for submission is 31 March. Further information is obtainable from Two Ravens Press tel 01854 655307.

→ [www.tworavenspress.com](http://www.tworavenspress.com)

### Island history

The Islands Book Trust, based on the Isle of Lewis, covers historical and social matters relating to all manner of island communities and presents them to people on visits, at events, and through its publications and website.

Two events in 2009 involve looking further afield, literally. Plans are being laid for a visit to the Faeroes in July and a September conference on emigration from the Outer Hebrides. Speakers will consider the main destinations of the past - Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Patagonia. More information is available at the website

→ [www.theislandsbooktrust.com](http://www.theislandsbooktrust.com)

ADVERT



The John Muir Trust is committed to working with communities and people to ensure that wild land is protected and that wild places are valued by everyone. But what is meant by 'wild land' and 'wild places'? It is difficult to protect wild land if it is not defined by widely agreed standards, whereas wild places have particular and unique value to everyone. In a special two-part feature, the Journal has invited Mike Daniels, a scientist, and Steven Carver, a geographer, to consider the challenges of defining wild land, while poet and philosopher Alastair McIntosh reflects on wild places and their value today.

# Wild land and wild places



# Defining wild land

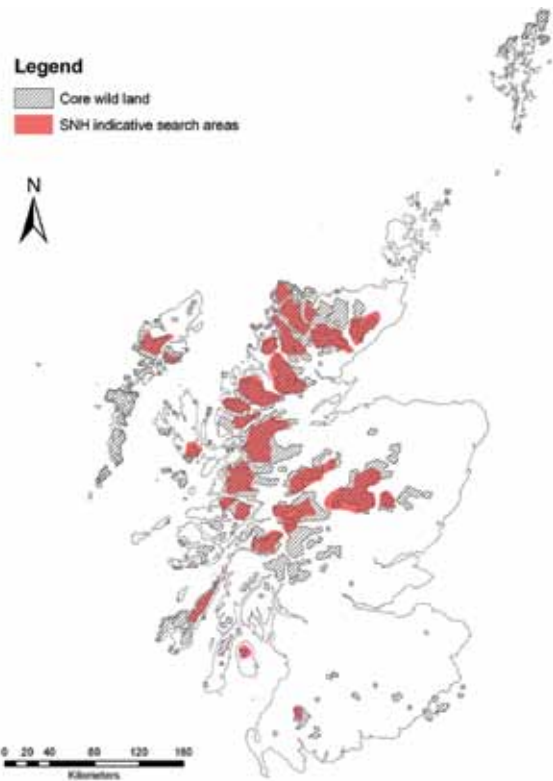
MIKE DANIELS & STEVEN CARVER

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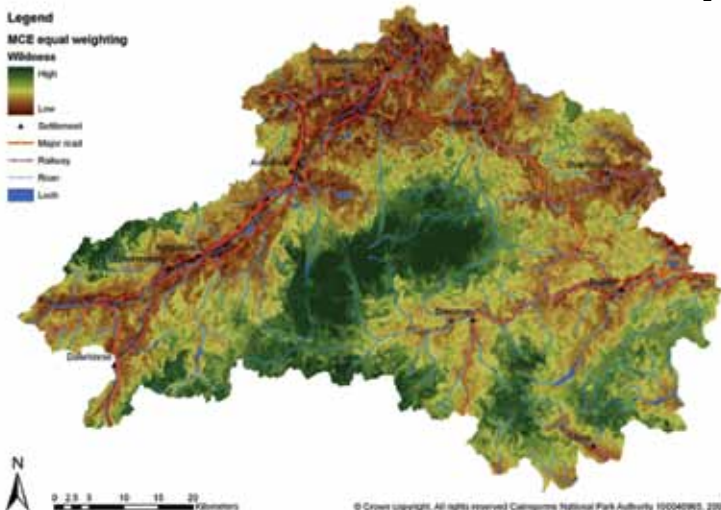
There is a philosophical and political debate surrounding the positives and negatives of defining wild land and wild places. For example, would a physical definition or designation help in safeguarding wild land from planning developments such as wind farms? Alternatively, by drawing lines on a map, are areas outside the lines neglected and consequently more vulnerable, or are aspirations for re-wilding excluded areas curtailed?

From a purely practical perspective, it is difficult to see how 'wild places' could ever be mapped. Arguably there are as many different views on what is wild as there are people. For 'wild land', however, there is a stronger argument to be made about drawing lines on maps. When discussing wild land, it would be useful to have a defined area to work with, for example when describing changes to the condition of wild land, or putting a value on it. Without physically defining it, it is difficult to accurately measure or describe anything about wild land.

There are two related ways around this conundrum. The first is to define 'core' wild land. This approach recognises that there is other wild land out there but that the defined area is the 'golden nugget' that must be protected or managed sensitively. The second approach is to take advantage of the flexibility of modern geographical information system (GIS) techniques. These allow for human perceptions as well as the physical attributes of the land to be mapped and for lines to be 'fuzzy' rather than sharp. Fuzzy lines



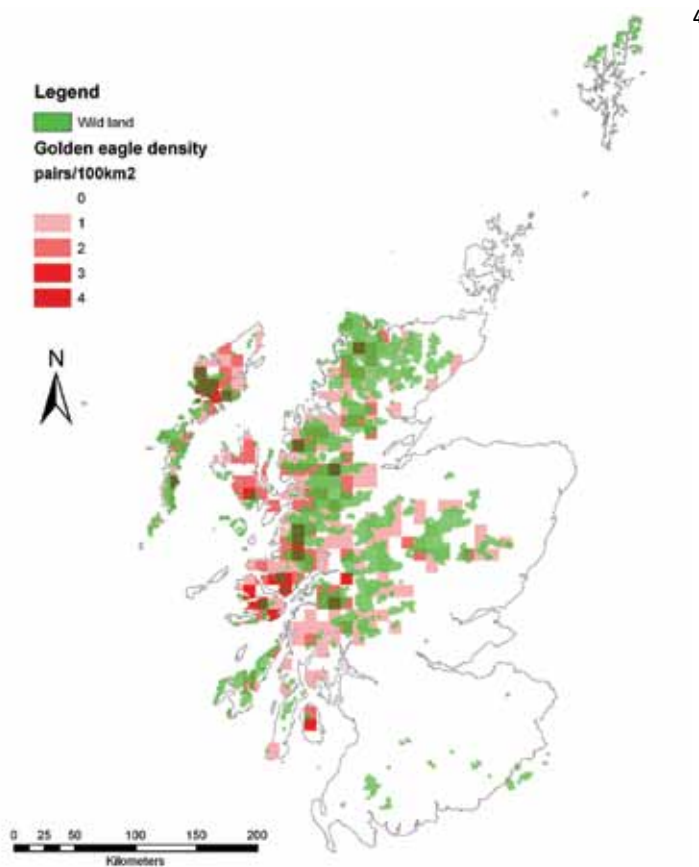
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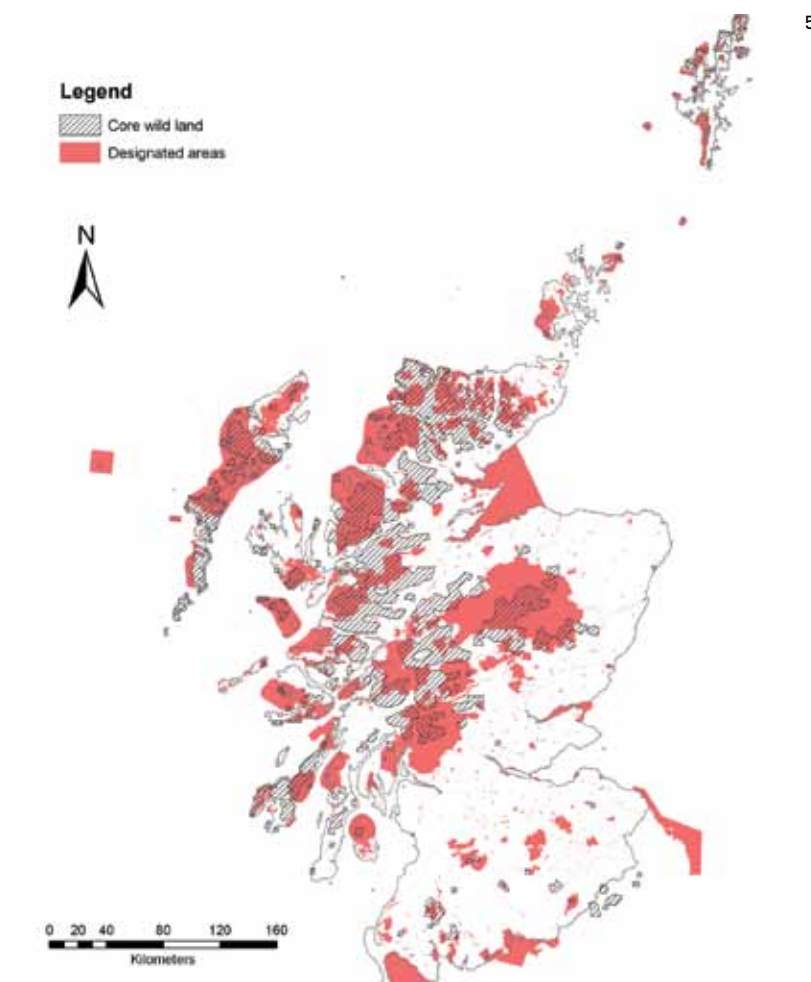
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produce a gradual change in wildness as opposed to a hard edge. Once created, such maps have the advantage of allowing the user to see what the impact of a particular development would be on the size and connectivity of existing wild land.

Such an approach has recently been developed by the Cairngorm National Park Authority area. Four maps were created for 'perceived naturalness' of the land cover, 'absence of modern human artefacts', 'rugged and challenging nature of the terrain' and 'remoteness from mechanised access.' These were then combined into a single wildness map (Figure 1). The graded colour scheme demonstrates that while a core wild land area can be clearly identified, it is also apparent that wildness doesn't stop at the edge of this area. The map has the potential to then be used by planners to model the effects of changes to land use, roads, developments etc.



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If such an approach were used on a national scale, how would wild land appear on the map? In Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage has previously published 'search areas' where wild land might be found, and the technique described here for the Cairngorms has recently been applied throughout Scotland in an attempt to define the core wild land. Both approaches are illustrated in Figure 2 (without the fuzzy edges for the purposes of illustration) and both show a broadly similar distribution.

Once a provisional map of core wild land exists, it would then be possible to compare it to other interpretations. For example, does the map bear any relation to the 'real world'? Previous authors (including contributors to this Journal) have noted the similarities between wild land and eagle distribution. Figure 3 supports this connection – the overlap between the two is strong – suggesting that eagles have a similar view of core wild land to humans!

In the debate about definitions and designations, a core wild land map can be used to see if existing protections such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and National Scenic Areas (NSAs) cover core wild land. Figure 4 shows that there is partial overlap but a large area of core wild land is not covered by any form of designation. It is worth noting that even where core wild land is covered by a designation, none of the existing designations explicitly refer to wild land itself, but rather to habitats, species or more general scenic qualities.

In summary, there are currently tools available to map core wild land in Scotland and such a map can be used to explore the coverage of existing protection measures. Whether such a map should be used as the basis of a formal definition or even a designation is a question for further debate. □

**THE AUTHORS**

■ Mike Daniels is Chief Scientific Officer of the John Muir Trust. Steve Carver is a lecturer in geography at the University of Leeds with a special interest in environmental GIS mapping and wilderness areas.

- 1 Loch Sguabaidh (also page 11) (Photo: Keith Brame)
- 2 Wild land map for the Cairngorm National Park Authority area
- 3 Proposed core wild land compared to SNH search areas
- 4 Proposed core wild land compared to eagle distribution
- 5 Proposed core wild land compared to designated sites

I write this from the Greater Govan area of Glasgow. The room from which I do much of my work looks directly on to a wire-tangled telephone pole, a tall Victorian chimney, and the red brick back end of a factory with a gleaming corrugated iron roof.

That and the sky are all I see. Yet I grew up on the moors and lochs of the Isle of Lewis. What drew my wife, Vèrène, and I here nearly five years ago was involvement with a local community regeneration group, the GalGael Trust. Participants in our training programme develop skills for life by learning to work with natural materials. Even though we're all living in the heart of a city, it's the wildness, the connection ultimately to wilderness beyond, that makes the difference in the magic breaking through.

For me, the wild starts beneath my window. We've two compost bins there, seething with tiger worms, millipedes and countless little critters of the soil. By digging garden ponds, we've successfully brought frogs back to the area. A local housewife wasn't too impressed to find them hibernating in her house, but the kids love it. One little girl cast her eye mischievously towards Vèrène and asked, "Alastair, what's a French woman doing with frogs in her garden?"

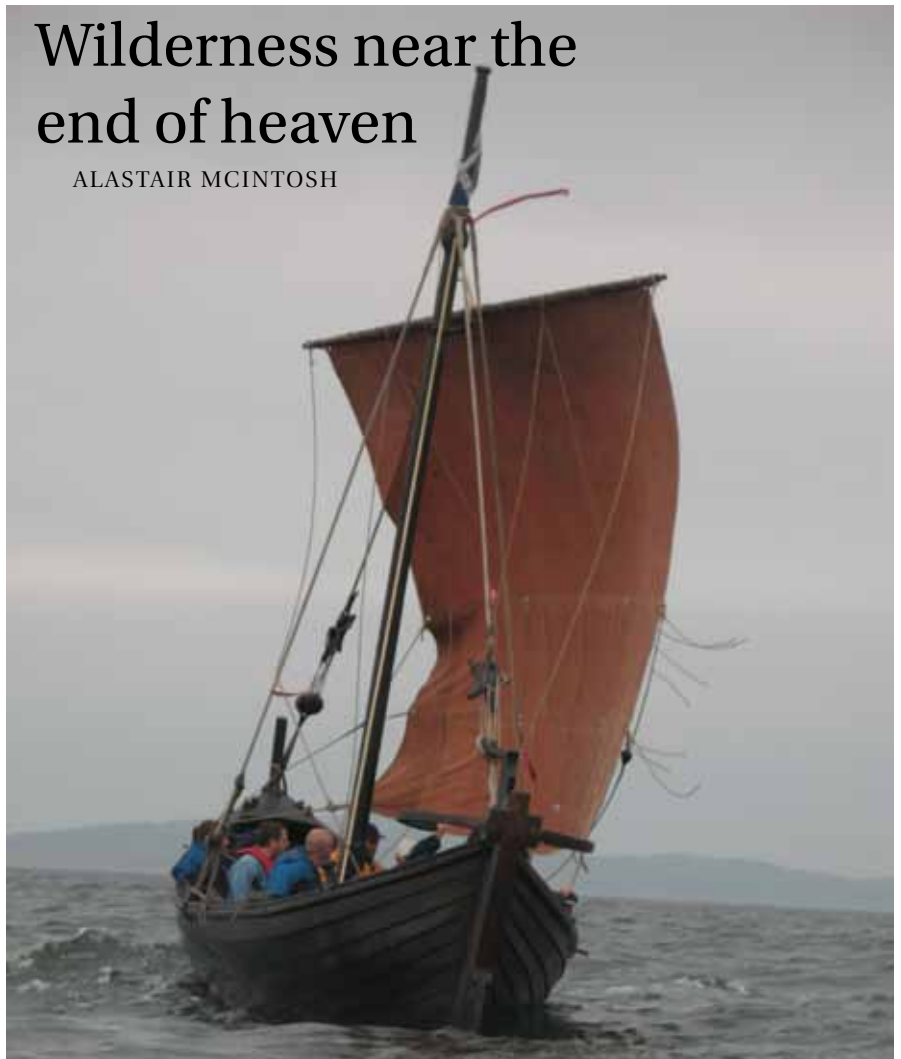
From my window I run my eye down the garden. That factory wall is great for the cherries, plums and pears. The telegraph pole's a summertime tangle of morning glories. And the other day I watched three swans in majestic procession pass high over the Victorian chimney. For beyond all the human frenzy of poverty-torn Govan winds the River Clyde. And once, when out in one of the traditional boats built in our GalGael workshop, I even watched a salmon leap as we tied up alongside the Braehead shopping centre to go and fetch Irn Bru.

For many people who grew up in an area like this, the river was never accessible. Most of it was blocked off, an estuarine ooze fished from time to time by police frogmen. But getting out in a boat changes that. You enter into the river's life in a way that's just not possible from the scenic heights of a traffic jam on the Kingston Bridge. As one of the crew said, "GalGael gave us back our river."

The truth is that a TV up a high-rise is a travesty of the real world. People need to see that no city is an island, entire unto itself. All cities are nested into the wildness and the wilderness beyond. There's an asymmetry here, for the city relies ecologically on its rural hinterland in a way that the hinterland does not rely upon the city.

## Wilderness near the end of heaven

ALASTAIR MCINTOSH



Not infrequently at academic conferences, I meet people better used to handling pencils than oars, who come out with statements like, "Nature is just a social construction, created by people who mostly live in cities."

Recently I heard a scholar use precisely those words at a conference hosted by the University of Ulster. She taught postmodern something-or-other in some city somewhere, and we'd been wryly pitched together on the panel for a rip-roaring debate. I'd heard this idea expressed before, but it still leaves me gobsmacked every time.

"Madam!," I replied, in a voice like a Monsanto manicured lawn about to undergo a volcanic eruption. "If that's what you really think, would you kindly stop drinking from your plastic bottle, because water's no social construction . . . it comes from real nature in real places somewhere out there."

"Oh," she protested, "but the city produces water! It rains on cities too, you know."

Those were her actual words!

"Well cities don't produce much oxygen," I replied, abandoning all decorum now and letting rip to the blizzard within. "So would you kindly speed up the experiment, and hold your breath? Then we'll see how long this particular 'social construction' of nature lasts!"

We made it up afterwards, but in my view such notions betray the poverty of perspective that comes about when folks get cut off from the elemental truths of fire, air, earth and water. That's why a river helps. We need contexts in which to take bearings on reality and find anchor points on solid bottom.

In his classic study of Celtic place names, Professor W J Watson suggested that the name, 'Clyde', pertains to the Brythonic river goddess, also known as Clud, Cludoita, Clutha or Clwyd. Some believe that her waters are good for treating seizures. In the GalGael's experience that is very true. For

as people row down through the tresses of this particular Goddess in all her moods of silver and blue, golden and green, and sail out into the wildness beyond, seizures at the core of being start to loosen their grip.

I'm not worried whether a gateway to reality like the Firth of Clyde is technically 'wilderness' or not. It's enough that it feels so in a small boat. What matters is that when people get to experience natural wildness in a properly supported context, their own inner elementality - those swirling strains of fire, air, earth and water - settles to a greater harmony. The poet Iain Crichton Smith said, "Scenery after all is only a reflection of the psyche." For evidence of this ultimate commonality of human and wild nature, listen to Gaelic song and examine, too, old photographs of people who have lived lives well settled into their place. These reveal a people grounded in their natural ecology. But when this diminishes, little wonder the human ecology gets dysfunctional too.

That's why it is important, wherever we can, to connect to real-life communities of place. It helps a person to develop all-round responsibility - the ability to respond to life. That, too, is what makes it vital to understand and respect the 'elders' of community - those who embody the spirit of a place.

It is not just the plants and wildlife adapted to a place that are special. It's also the people rooted there. They, too, must not be trampled. Every time I go back to the north and west it vexes me to see how divided between indigenous and incomer some

of our communities have become. In my opinion, the need to reconcile this is the greatest challenge facing environmental organisations in Scotland today.

I side with the indigenous on this. They are the guardians of place. If the guest behaves insensitively and prematurely takes over the guesthouse, it short-circuits deeply held cultural principles of hospitality for the short term and fostership for permanence. That breaks a sacred gift and spoils it for everybody.

The type of incomer who comes only to buy the view, or to speculate in what they rudely call 'property,' pours poison on how local people can thereafter relate to their own environment. It jaundices the very notion of nature and environmentalism. Because 'the environment' is all that 'they' - the incomer - sometimes seems to care about, it becomes a proxy for 'them,' for 'their type,' and for what too often comes over as their loud, pushy, patronising and colonising ways.

And that's something that I can say, indeed, must say, for I've seen it from both sides. I was born in England and raised in Scotland of a Scottish father and an English mother.

Happily, there are positive signs of organisations and individuals starting to face such divisions and work towards greater cohesion of community for the future. I see it, for example, where environmental agencies put their weight solidly behind community land buy-outs. I see it also in that other type of incomer

- the one who comes to share and not just take - offering perhaps considerable skills in the cause of local community regeneration.

Let me draw this discussion back to the city and its rural context. In the early 1980s, unemployment in Clydebank rose to 30% as the shipyards closed. My friend, Duncan MacLaren, a Gaelic poet of that town, wrote:

"Bruach Chluaidh. Bidh brùadar air uair agam 's tu nad eilean air bhog eadar Ceann Bharraidh agus Nèimh ... Clydebank ... I sometimes dream that you are an island afloat between Barra Head and the end of Heaven and that the only speech on the tongues of your people is the language of the Hebrides and the mists would put a poultice on your stinking houses and it wouldn't be vomit on the street but bogcotton and your rusty river would be a dark-green sea. And, in the faces of your people, the wrinkles of their misery would only be the lash of wind and waves and your grinding poverty would somehow be diminished ... agus thigeadh lughdachadh air do bhochdainn chràidh."

Such vomit and bogcotton is no social construction. And yet, people are integral to it. Their identity, perhaps like that of us all to varying degrees, flows as an umbilical tide between the worlds of 'civilisation' and 'wilderness'.

Nobody here tries to usurp the elements. Nature is accepted on its own terms, with humility, indeed, with a grace that unfolds into Providence.

The wrinkles on people's faces and the waves on the sea are of one ordering.

For this is true nature wild. And near the end of Heaven, where the lash of sorrow's waves dissolve to tears of tenderness, this is human nature too. ☐

#### THE AUTHOR

■ Alastair McIntosh is author of *Soil and Soul*. His most recent books are *Rekindling Community* and *Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition*.

→ [www.galgael.org](http://www.galgael.org)

→ [www.alastairmcintosh.com](http://www.alastairmcintosh.com)



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1 GalGael in their birlinn, the Orcuan, on the Firth of Clyde (Photo: Andy Bowman)

2 The GalGael in the Orcuan, on the Clyde (Photo: Bernie Whyte)

ADVERT

## VISITORS ENLISTED FOR WILDLIFE SURVEY

Visitors to John Muir Trust properties are being asked to share their wildlife sightings and observations to assist the work of the Trust's wild land project.

The Wild Land Rangers and other Trust staff are already reporting their sightings and this data is stored at Pitlochry by Biodiversity Officer, Liz Auty. Members and supporters can also help by reporting what they have spotted when visiting Trust properties. Where appropriate, we will pass on these sightings to the various national recorders on your behalf.

"All records are useful, but we are particularly interested in unusual or rare species. For example, if you spot a golden eagle or a wildcat, we would be very interested, or if you have a particular interest in a subject, such as fungi, we could benefit from your specialist knowledge," says Liz. "Our Rangers are sending in information about the commoner bird species and conduct regular counts of red deer, so we won't need information on these species."

Please send in your sightings by using the recording form which can be found on the Trust's website at [www.jmt.org/wildland-project.asp](http://www.jmt.org/wildland-project.asp) or by e-mailing [elizabeth@jmt.org](mailto:elizabeth@jmt.org)



### SPECIES PROFILE

## Look out for the Blaeberry Bumblebee

In future editions of the Journal, we will be profiling particular species found on John Muir Trust lands. Fran Lockhart introduces a particularly distinctive bumblebee.

Bumblebees are useful indicators of the health of the environment because they depend on the presence of an abundance of diverse flora but the last few decades have seen a marked decline in their numbers. Populations have been declining, particularly over the past 50 years, due to the loss of flower-rich habitats. Christiane Nitsch, of the

Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT), is keen for John Muir Trust members to help in a simple survey between March and September of one bumblebee in particular, the Mountain or Blaeberry Bumblebee. It is one of those little-known species that frequents at least one of our properties: Christine reports she has seen one flying around the rugged summit of Schiehallion. Although this bee, with its stunning chestnut bottom, prefers montane habitats such as heather moorland and old pinewoods that are rich in flowering blaeberry and heathers, sallows, bird's-foot trefoil and white clover, it can also be found in more low-lying areas.

Specialist knowledge is not essential for identifying the Mountain Bumblebee as the BBCT provides easy-to-follow guidelines and a recording form. Although the Mountain Bumblebee is not a UK BAP species and has no official Red Book status, long-term range contractions give cause for concern as with all our bumblebees. The BBCT

is interested in records from all over the country, and further information on habitat and behaviour. John Muir Trust would also like to hear from members who spot this, or any other, bumblebee on our properties so this information can be fed into our Wildland Project.

So when you sit down for a breather on your next hike, keep an ear open for that sound of summer, the gentle buzzing of the humble bumblebee.

### GET INVOLVED

Would you like to get involved with this survey? If you are a hillwalker, Rambler or mountaineer or simply enjoy the outdoors and would like to be a 'Monticola Monitor', please contact Christiane Nitsch at BBCT: e-mail [monticola@bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk](mailto:monticola@bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk) or telephone 01786 467818 or visit the website.

→ [www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk/monticola.htm](http://www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk/monticola.htm)



Large red damselfly and bloodspot lichen (Photos: Don O'Driscoll)

Bumblebee (Photo: John Watson)

2008 was a busy year for debates and discussions about the future of farming and crofting in the hills of Scotland, with the publication of a range of reports and consultations. Central to the debate was a report published by the Scottish Agricultural College dramatically entitled 'Farming's retreat from the hills'. This showed a decline in the national sheep flock from nearly 10 million in 1991 to 7.5 million in 2007, with the greatest reductions taking place in the Highlands and Islands and the south west of Scotland. In response, the National Farmers' Union Scotland published a 'Manifesto for the hills' which posed the question: "Do we simply accept this decline in agricultural activity as an inescapable consequence of market forces? Or do we recognise the social, environmental and economic benefits delivered by the industry and seek innovative solutions to secure its future?"

While, at first sight, a reduction in livestock grazing may appear to be a good thing for wild land, in reality the predicted consequences are more complex. These reports highlighted the potential winners (heather, alpine plants, woodland edge, small mammals, red and black grouse) and losers (eagle and raven - less sheep carrion - and meadow pipit, skylark and wheatear). Into this mix was also thrown increases in Molinia grass and bracken, with associated declines in curlew and golden plover. An alternative scenario further muddied the waters by raising the possibility that deer and hare numbers would rise - effectively replacing sheep grazing.



## Wild land must have place in farming debate

While not considering any potential wild land aspects of a reduction (re-wilding or natural processes), both reports perceived it in terms of 'land abandonment'. They highlighted the positive biodiversity benefits of current practices, such as grazed species-rich grassland and corncrake conservation. Such farming practices - low intensity, low input, semi-natural systems grazed by livestock - have recently been termed 'High Nature Value' farmland (HNV) by the European Union. Scotland's contribution to HNV farmland was recognised and supported by a third report, published by Scottish Environment Link, entitled 'Beyond the CAP - towards a sustainable land use policy that works for Scotland'.

All three reports criticised the ineffectiveness of current agricultural subsidies in delivering HNV farmland.

... A REDUCTION IN LIVESTOCK GRAZING MAY APPEAR TO BE A GOOD THING FOR WILD LAND, IN REALITY THE PREDICTED CONSEQUENCES ARE MORE COMPLEX.

MIKE DANIELS

Overall, there is a lot of thinking and debating going on regarding the current state and future direction of farming in Scotland's hills and islands and what this means for the environment, jobs and the rural economy. On the one hand Scottish Environment Link's vision for the future is to pay farmers for delivering 'public goods' in the form of biodiversity, landscape access and ecosystem services while, on the other, the NFU position is essentially to keep paying farmers to be farmers. Potentially there is a lot to play for. In the short term there may

be re-distribution of subsidies from the east/north-east of Scotland towards the north-west. More major change is on the horizon for 2013 when the Common Agricultural Policy faces its next major shake up. It is crucial that the role of wild land - on which a lot of crofting and HNV farming takes place or impinges - is not forgotten. It is also vital that wild land is recognised as an important land use in its own right in any developing integrated land use strategy.

Mike Daniels, Chief Scientific Officer,  
John Muir Trust



## Discover the Trust at work on 'Open Days' across Scotland



A programme of 'Open Days' is being planned for 2009 when John Muir Trust members will be able to meet up with Trust staff on the estates where they work. The programme, which will cover all the Trust's properties, will provide an opportunity to discover more about the properties owned by the Trust, the wild life found on them, and the management policies being applied.

Details of this programme will be published on the website [www.jmt.org](http://www.jmt.org) and sent to those members who receive monthly news e-mails. If you are a Trust member, you can join the news e-mailing by contacting [membership@jmt.org](mailto:membership@jmt.org)



## Communities discuss sustainable energy use

If you had passed by Sconser Lodge Hotel at the end of October 2008, you would have found a hive of activity with people from various communities which have an association with the John Muir Trust engrossed in discussions about how to be sustainable in the future - using energy without costing the earth. Fran Loot reports:

The two-day workshop attended by 24 people included representatives from Knoydart, Assynt, North Harris, the communities of Strathaird, Sconser and Torrin on Skye as well as John Muir Trust staff and representatives from the Energy Savings Trust and the Climate Challenge Fund.

A highlight of the event for many was the inspirational talk given by Maggie Fyffe and Lucy Conway on what they have achieved on the Isle of Eigg in terms of sustainable energy. The project is a world leader in the integration of multiple

renewable energy sources into a grid system to supply an isolated and scattered small community. Key to the success is the support from the community which includes each household having their energy use capped.

The workshop gave communities an opportunity to step back from the day-to-day pressures and consider what factors would help them to be more sustainable and what may get in the way. Quality of life, the landscape, sense of community and being able to make decisions at a community level were all cited

as aspects of life that people enjoyed where they live now and that contribute to the sustainability of a community. However, communities are also vulnerable when they are isolated and there can be an overdependency on either one employer or external input - be it from the public or private sector.

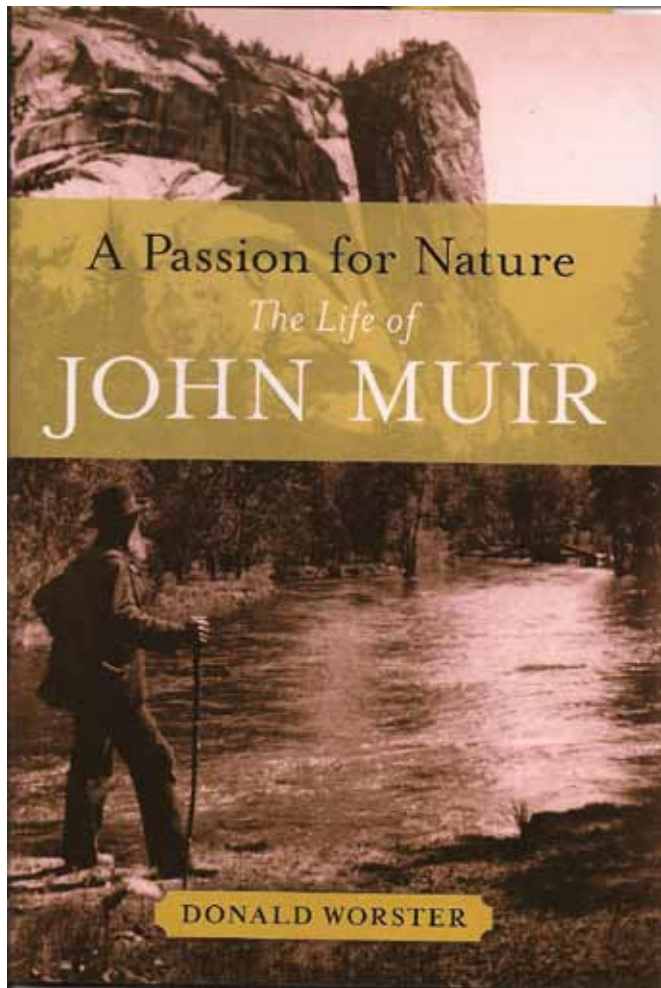
There were also useful inputs from Jason Leon of the Energy Saving Trust on support available to reduce carbon footprints while David Gunn spoke about support available to communities through the Climate Challenge Fund. David Cameron and Fran Loots shared their experiences of keeping communities involved in decisions.

The workshop ended with communities working on action plans for how they will address sustainability in the future. Actions being considered included:

- Raising awareness, through community events, of what opportunities there are to reduce energy costs and conduct energy audits
- Conducting feasibility studies looking at micro hydro and options for using wood sustainably
- Looking at ways to reduce the food miles - keeping and eating more food locally
- Looking at how to make the John Muir Trust properties more energy efficient

1 Cathel Morrison with visitor, in foreground, at the Trust property, Sandwood Bay

2 Don O'Driscoll, right, discusses an insect found by visitors



### A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir

Donald Worster

Review by Terry Gifford

This is only the second life of John Muir that has gone back to original sources and it is a great advance upon Frederick Turner's *Rediscovering America: John Muir in his Time and Ours* (1985). Here is a more complicated and a more contextualised Muir whose contradictions are not avoided: Scottish educated in America, professional engineer and part-time botanist, a sustainer of friendships with women who could not broach marriage, a serious horticulturalist who could resist the pull of the wild for a decade, a wealth-accumulating businessman who valued simplicity, friend of those railroading America who nevertheless spoke for wilderness, and, ultimately, a man of compromise whose writings demanded entrenched conservationist positions. The environmental historian, Donald Worster, has produced a fresh and more nuanced version of Muir that is a riveting read.

Although Worster is shaky on general Scottish historical background (Scottish readers will spot howlers on pages 16 and 36/7), his detailed research in the National Archives of Scotland reveals that Muir's father was a wealthy and powerful man in Dunbar, popular with voters and with a reputation for probity. But it was the rejection of every form of church available that took Daniel Muir to Edinburgh to hear Alexander Campbell speak of the clergy-free

gatherings he had established in America. Within a few months, Daniel Muir determined that the family would 'take the boat', along with Highland families at the height of the Clearances in 1849.

It is in the richness of its detail and its historical contexts that this biography makes its mark. Worster's knowledge of the environmental history of the West leads to some telling observations: "Muir had arrived in the West at precisely the moment when new careers in scientific exploration were being made." But actually government-sponsored geologists and botanists were funded to promote industrial and agricultural exploitation of the landscapes they explored. Muir's devotion to both empiricism and spiritual renewal sometimes resulted in his missing the political motivations of others. This gives an interesting and topical twist to the old and continuing debate of the preservationists versus the conservationists which resolves itself into the issue of 'How much use?', or, indeed, 'How much management?' – the very issue which provoked the foundation of the John Muir Trust in the face of encroaching signage, trails and visitor centres, or military usage of wilderness.

Like the original John Muir Trust, Muir wanted to provide and publicise a good example that others might be encouraged to follow. But the motivations of some of the others established a context in which to be a non-interventionist was to win the moral battle, but lose the landscape war. The later Muir's lobbying with a politically astute publicist – Robert Underwood Johnson – won many local and short-term battles, but actually probably lost the long-term war, we might observe as we review the Bush legacy. Saving some forests and parks did not ultimately challenge the American dream's notion of growth, or its values grounded in wealth, which have regularly won the big political debates about landscape values. (Has saving some estates offered strong enough alternative values to challenge the capitalist power driving the necessary alternative energy business in Scotland?)

Worster does not duck such issues. Muir was prepared to sacrifice 'ordinary' landscapes (Lake Eleanor, within Yosemite National Park) to save 'extraordinary' ones (Hetch-Hetchy Valley, also within the park). "Politically, the distinction would be difficult to make



and susceptible to economic influence”, comments Worster. During the long years of San Francisco’s campaign to turn the Hetch-Hetchy Valley into a reservoir for the city’s water supply, Muir and the Sierra Club were ‘not paying attention’ when a bill was passed permitting water conduits through the National Park.

And, ultimately, Muir was not supported in this fight by his rich friends: “The sad lesson staring Muir in the face was that those who already had plenty of wealth could be weak, undependable allies in the struggle.” Muir had dictated his memoirs of Scotland and Wisconsin, *My Boyhood and Youth*, at the Lake Klamath country retreat of the West’s railway magnate, Edward Harriman. (Worster points to a current debate that Muir ignored about draining the Klamath Basin, a nationally important wildlife refuge, for agricultural land.) But Harriman failed to support Muir in the Hetch-Hetchy campaign. The openness to nature that Muir found in some of his rich friends did not ultimately moderate their belief in ‘economic growth, national expansion, and material values above everything else’.

This is very far from being a biography that is sceptical about Muir’s sustained influence. With the strong regional and national presence of the Sierra Club in America, a world-wide network of National Parks, a thriving and increasingly urgent international conservation movement and the establishment of a John Muir Trust,



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how could it not be? But it is a biography that thoughtfully raises issues for readers in the present. Muir’s dilemmas and compromises still face us in new forms, not least in the British nation’s testing of current environmental balancing acts in the land of Muir’s birth. This wonderfully readable book ends with the words: “Muir was a man who tried to find the essential goodness in the world, an optimist about people and nature, an eloquent prophet of a new world that looked to nature for its standards and inspiration. Looking back at the trail he blazed, we must wonder how far we have yet to go.” ┘

■ *A Passion for Nature*, Oxford University Press, £18.99. ISBN 978-0-19-516682-8

THE REVIEWER

Terry Gifford has compiled and edited two major omnibus editions of Muir’s writings - *John Muir: The Eight Wilderness Discovery Books* (£25) (his most well-known books) and *John Muir, His Life and Letters and Other Writings* (£20) (which has Muir’s autobiography, prepared for publication after his death by his executor William Bade; the seminal geological treatise ‘Studies in the Sierra’ in which Muir successfully challenged the then accepted theories on the origins of Yosemite Valley; and books on his later Alaskan explorations).

Both books are available to members at the list price, post free, or combined for £32, including dispatch. An extra £3 postage will apply for Ireland, the Channel Isles and postcode areas IV, KW, KA27-28, PH19-44, 49-50 and PA20-88. Ideally, please submit an address where a DHL parcel can be delivered during business hours.

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Offer ends 30 April 2009.



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Photos by kind permission of John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. Copyright 1984 Muir-Hanna Trust

- 1 Muir identifying a petrified log, Arizona, circa 1905
- 2 Muir’s drawing of sequoias scorched by fire, Mariposa Grove, 1875
- 3 John Muir in the Catskills with fellow writer and naturalist, John Burroughs



# Environment charities forced to debate economics

HELEN MCDADE

The law on planning in Scotland is being rewritten. The implications for environmental charities such as the John Muir Trust are profound. It is no longer enough for environmentalists to make the environmental case convincingly: we need the skill to win the economic arguments as well.

It was not always so. The Trust's first major activity in the 1980s was raising funds and buying land at Li and Coire Dhorrcail on Knoydart to restore woodland and encourage natural regeneration. For some time thereafter, the Trust's main focus was raising funds to buy estates which were under a specific threat or where the Trust believed it could demonstrate improved environmental management. The Trust now has eight estates on which we are demonstrating a difference, as well as working in partnerships elsewhere.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CASE IS NOT ENOUGH TO WIN A DECISION, EVEN WHEN A SCHEME WOULD BE A MAJOR INCURSION INTO WILD LAND.

Increasingly the environmental movement has recognised that to protect the environment we need a population which understands and values that environment, natural and cultural. Regulation and designation can only be part of the answer. Therefore, towards the end of the 1990s, the Trust felt it was important to reach out and inspire young people and others with John Muir's ethos and to increase awareness of the importance and fragility of our wild areas. This led to the highly respected and thriving John Muir Award.

The extent and variety of threats to wild land is increasing. The Trust cannot intervene to protect wild land at local level every

time it is under threat. As Walter Semple explains in his account of the Beaulieu Denny Inquiry opposite, we simply do not have the resources. Instead of attempting to redress the consequences of damaging policies, the Trust has increased its activities in a third major area of work, that of attempting to influence policymakers. Trust staff meet policymakers on a one-to-one basis, provide written briefings, appear before parliamentary committees and work through the media.

This is particularly necessary in the current economic crisis when the first thing to be jettisoned in the planning process is due consideration of natural heritage in favour of 'sustainable economic growth'. The Scottish Government has stated that it has "a single purpose - to create a more successful country where all of Scotland can flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth". How does "sustainable economic growth" fit with the commitment to "sustainable development"? Is it really possible to have continuous growth while protecting our natural environment? In other words, is it true, as claimed in a recent conference briefing, that "In recent years, we have begun to break the link between economic development and environmental damage"?

The proposed Lurcher's Gully ski-development was rejected after a Public Inquiry and a campaign which galvanised environmental bodies into Scottish Environment Link. The Lingerabay 'super quarry' proposal on Harris was abandoned after ten years, by which time the vaunted economic benefits were less convincing. The Cairngorm Funicular Railway, despite opposition from environmental bodies, did not go to Public Inquiry but opened thanks to public money. Forecast jobs and customer numbers did not materialise and public subsidy soared. Audit Scotland is now investigating.

Despite past experience, national enterprise agencies are particularly keen to believe that a big development attracting substantial

public funding will solve economic difficulties and that environmental concerns should not be allowed to stand in the way. The proposed Trump development in Aberdeenshire is a straw in the wind. The business case for this has, mostly, been uncritically accepted - the number of jobs, the demand for upmarket housing. In granting that application, the Minister accepted that there were significant adverse environmental effects but that the social and economic benefit outweighed them, though the credit crunch might prove that view mistaken. The decision turned on a planning clause of critical importance to environmental campaigners: National Planning Policy Guidance 14 para 25 which states:

"Development which would affect a designated area of national importance should only be permitted where:

- the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised, or
- any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance."

By the time you read this, the decision on the proposed Muaitheabhal wind power development in South Lewis, which the Trust vigorously opposed, may have been announced. The Public Local Inquiry turned entirely on consideration of the above planning clause in relation to the National Scenic Area (NSA). It is not enough to prove adverse effects on the NSA, no matter how severe those effects can be shown to be: the social and economic benefits must also be challenged by ANY opponents, including environmental bodies. Environmental considerations such as the impact on birds were not allowed at the Inquiry but would be considered by Ministers. The importance of making the economic case meant that the Trust was extremely fortunate to have Professor Andrew Bain volunteer to analyse

the economic argument, cross-examine on it and give evidence for the Trust. If the development is refused, there is no doubt that this evidence was critical. The environmental case is not enough to win a decision, even when a scheme would be a major incursion into wild land.

Now a new Planning Act has been brought in and secondary legislation is being considered as the Journal goes to press. At the start of 2009, the National Planning Framework (NPF) was considered within a 60-day period in the Scottish Parliament. It contains twelve National Developments which range from airport extensions and major road building to ten electricity transmission grid upgrades. Link fought hard for some public right of involvement in the process but none was included. If the NPF and National Developments have gone through parliament without significant change, there will be no public right to challenge the need for any of the developments at a Public Local Inquiry, a right for which the SNP fought in opposition.

'Saving the environment' today is less a matter of fighting an endless succession of local battles but of fighting to ensure that the policies of government and consequent legislation are not re-engineered to ensure the inevitable defeat of the environmental case, time after time. 「」



Helen McDade is Head of Policy at the John Muir Trust.

VOLUNTEERS DIG IN TO SUPPORT TRUST'S ARGUMENTS

## Fighting against the odds for environmental case

The popular image of a John Muir Trust volunteer is of someone in muddy boots digging ditches or planting trees. But this valuable work is only part of the volunteer story. Members are volunteering their skills and expertise to support the Trust in many different ways. Walter Semple (pictured) is a lawyer who describes himself as being in 'the later part' of his career. He appeared for the John Muir Trust and five other environmental charities in the Beauldy Denny Power Line Inquiry in 2007. As he explains, it is no longer enough to argue the case for 'scenic beauty'.

During the Inquiry, Sir Donald Miller, formerly chairman of South of Scotland Electricity Board, had presented a witness statement. It explained how electricity could be transmitted more cheaply by adapting the existing east coast pylon line without the need to upgrade the line from Beauldy to Denny, thus avoiding environmental damage:

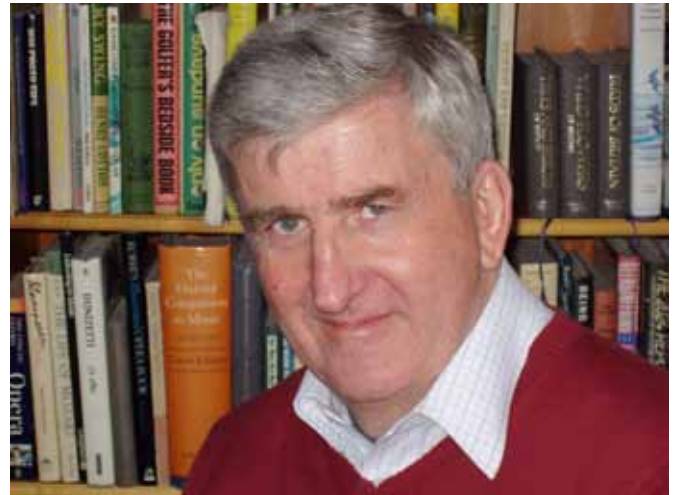
Ailsa Wilson QC: (cross examining): "What detailed knowledge do you have of the east coast line, Sir Donald?"

Sir Donald: "Quite a lot. I built it."

This special moment in the Beauldy Denny Inquiry offers an example of how a group of professionals with long experience in their disciplines was able to help six environmental charities present a strong objection to the Beauldy Denny proposal.

When, as a Trust member, I was faced with an appeal for funds to support challenges to wind farm proposals, I responded with an offer to contribute in kind. I have conducted a number of planning appeals over the years. About six months later, I was asked to appear in the Beauldy Denny Inquiry.

This substantial piece of work involved three months of intensive preparation and a twelve-week 'strategy' hearing. I agreed to work on an expenses-only basis as the funds for legal fees were not available. No fees were paid to any of our witnesses. I was carrying out the role of both solicitor and advocate,



travelling each day from Glasgow to the hearings in Perth.

Evidence on environmental damage which would be caused by the development was readily obtained from the resources available to the six charity objectors. Obtaining witnesses to deal with the electrical power industry case and economic case was more difficult. We were fortunate

learning enough of the issues to be able to conduct a cross-examination. As a result, I was able to learn something about the basics of power generation and transmission at the hands of experts.

The conduct of the Inquiry was unusually hostile to objectors. Rulings made by the Reporters who conducted the Inquiry prevented Sir Donald Miller and Professor

### THE CONDUCT OF THE [BEAULDY DENNY] INQUIRY WAS UNUSUALLY HOSTILE TO OBJECTORS.

indeed to enlist the help of Sir Donald as well as Colin Gibson and Derek Birkett, also experienced power engineers, and Professor Andrew Bain who has taken a special interest in the economics of the generation and transmission of electricity.

The lawyer in this situation has the challenge of speed

Bain from presenting all of their evidence. The disallowed evidence was highly relevant. It was disallowed because it was not fully set out in their advance witness statements. These statements were prepared before they had had an opportunity to consider the Applicants' evidence. Tribunals should seek to learn the

relevant facts. Procedural rules are designed to assist, and not to frustrate, submission of relevant evidence.

The procedure was unsatisfactory in another respect. The power companies were represented by a team of lawyers of whom normally seven attended the strategy hearing where I appeared. The public bodies who objected, such as Highland Council and SNH, were represented by advocates and solicitors at public expense. Private objectors such as the Trust were not in a position to pay legal fees. However, the power company Applicants sought and obtained permission to recover much of their legal expense from consumers of electricity. This unfair arrangement put the Applicants

wind-generated electricity. Electricity generated by wind cannot be relied on to be available when it is needed, and may be available when it is not needed. When there is no wind, other types of generation must remain available. Existing power generation methods can be replaced by wind generation only to a limited extent. Claimed benefits in reduced carbon emissions have been grossly exaggerated, as confirmed in a recent ruling by the Advertising Standards Authority. These disadvantages are compensated by large subsidies.

The economic case was false. For example, it was made on the basis of the cost of electricity transmission to Denny. But Scotland exports about one third of

## THE ECONOMIC CASE WAS FALSE ... SCOTLAND EXPORTS ABOUT ONE THIRD OF ITS ELECTRICITY.

at an advantage additional to the fact that they were already large and wealthy companies.

Generation and transmission of electricity in the Scottish highlands presents issues and priorities quite different from elsewhere in Britain. Populations are small, distances great and the landscapes unique. Since the advent of hydro electricity, power transmission in Scotland has always been a subject apart from that in England and Wales. Privatisation changed all that. The key considerations are now financial profit for shareholders and subsidy.

The Regulator, OFGEM, refused to appear at the Inquiry or concern himself with environmental issues, despite being bound by express statutory obligations to safeguard the environment.

The purpose of the proposed pylon line is to transmit

its electricity. The resulting additional cost of transmission was ignored.

The outcome of the Inquiry remains unknown as this Journal goes to press. Whatever the outcome, it was a worthwhile exercise for the Trust to undertake. The case of the power companies was challenged on both power industry issues and economics in ways which otherwise would not have happened. The case for the environment was made in detail and at length.

There is gradually increasing awareness that we must all learn to live in harmony with the natural world rather than exploiting it for short term economic gain. Despoiling the highland landscape to generate and transmit intermittent electricity over long distances is surely inconsistent with living in harmony with nature. ┘

## Report reveals environmental damage caused by wind farms

RICHARD HILL

The environmental impact of wind turbine installations can be as damaging as the effects of global warming they are designed to prevent. That's the principal finding of 'Impacts of Wind Farms on Upland Habitats', a report published by John Muir Trust staff.

The Trust's policy team reviewed environmental statements of wind power developments which had been submitted in planning applications throughout the Scottish Highlands. It was also aided by published information from the University of Stirling and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) which revealed the industrial scale of the impacts on the ground.

Calculations based on the renewable industry's own figures show that the land-take for an installation of between 16 and 53 wind turbines impacts on an area of 6.5 to 44 ha – equivalent to more than 550 football pitches. The installation of turbines requires the removal of large areas of habitat in order to build the foundations, the surrounding hard-standing for construction equipment and heavy plant, storage areas, control buildings, roads and associated drainage. Large areas of upland grassland, heather moorland and peat bog need to be cleared to enable the construction of wind turbines.

Reducing the environmental impact of such work requires the successful completion of subsequent restoration works. Mitigation measures can include replanting and the use of low-impact civil engineering practices such as 'floating roads'. However, on visiting sites, the Trust, in many cases, found little evidence of successful restoration or the use of low impact techniques. Based on the photographic evidence, there is concern that:

- habitats are not being successfully restored
- the restored habitats do not have the same biodiversity and carbon storage value
- clearance of vegetation, compaction of soils, re-profiling of slopes etc result in erosion damage and associated siltation within river catchments.

Ironically, these impacts on upland areas are very similar to what is expected from climate change. University of Stirling research indicated that areas which had been extensively disturbed by the construction of wind turbines, showed increased concentrations of dissolved organic carbon and sediment in neighbouring drainage systems and rivers. The research revealed that on peatlands, between 25% to 50% of the carbon that would normally be taken up each year is lost "and so adds significantly to the potential impacts of climate change". It concluded that increases in sediment and organic matter eroded from turbine sites could also have an impact on spawning fish stocks such as salmon and trout, down-river from construction areas.



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Research by the RSPB reported three factors associated with wind turbine sites which appear to have a negative impact on some peatland bird populations:

- preferred locations of wind turbine developments closely correspond to habitats suitable for peatland birds such as golden plover
- birds appear to avoid otherwise suitable upland habitats if wind turbines are present
- the breeding density of birds appears to be lower than predicted at sites containing wind turbines.

The RSPB research suggests lower bird numbers could be the result of birds avoiding the sites - causing displacement of populations to other sites - and increased adult bird mortality as a result of collisions with turbines. Insensitively-sited wind turbines on upland areas are exacerbating the impacts of climate change on habitats and species that they claim to be preventing. The research concludes: "bird populations that are under stress from wind farm development are likely to be more susceptible to additional pressures from climate change". A worst-case outcome could see the survival of a species under threat.

The Trust report suggests a number of policy changes that should be made at Scottish, UK and European Union level to reduce the impact of wind turbines. Protection of upland habitats would be aided if the Scottish Government implemented advice from its own officials, given in 2006, as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Scottish Rural Development Policy. The SEA recognised that upland areas are potentially at risk, and continued: "mitigation measures suggested include the development of a national renewable strategy in Scotland which would identify those areas where wind farms [and other renewable] schemes should be permitted." The damage wind turbines pose

is exacerbated by unco-ordinated development across Scotland. There has been a failure by successive governments in Scotland and the UK to consider properly the implications of siting wind farms in upland areas. The Trust has been calling for a National Energy Strategy for some time. This should be broader than just a renewable energy strategy, and should cover energy demand reduction as well as energy production.

The report is not against wind turbines. The Trust absolutely supports the government's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and effective measures to deliver those targets. It argues that wind turbines can be a sustainable part of the armoury against climate change, but only if installations are sited and operated to reduce their environmental impact. Wind turbine installations should be subject to the same standard of environmental protection regulation as any other major civil engineering projects. Wind turbines should not be used as an isolated solution, but as part of a mix of other sustainable and low greenhouse gas emitting energy options. There should be a presumption in favour of small community-scale developments and a national debate about whether there is a size and scale of turbine which would be excessive anywhere in Scotland's scale of landscape.

The report concludes that it is not necessary to allow a free-for-all on our best landscapes and habitats in order to fulfil renewable energy targets. It is not enough for developers to say, "This is a green project" and then expect to get away with shoddier standards than would otherwise have been applied. Wind developments are major engineering projects and all relevant EU directives, such as the Habitats Directive, and national regulation should be applied. □

For a copy of the report visit the John Muir Trust website.

→ [www.jmt.org](http://www.jmt.org)

Richard Hill is the Trust's Climate Change Policy Officer

1 Turbine development on upland grassland/heather moorland. Five metre width track. Note no restoration of habitat. Soil left exposed to erosion.

2 Sides of drainage channel showing erosion damage and collapse.

ADVERTS



## Lifetime Achievement Award

Irvine Butterfield, writer, photographer and mountain enthusiast, has been presented with the John Muir Trust's Lifetime Achievement Award. Irvine has dedicated his life to the conservation of wild land and has authored many books, most recently *The Magic of Munros*.

Irvine signed up as the Trust's fifth member at its creation in 1983. He is a long-term and assiduous supporter of both the Trust and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and was instrumental in setting up the Mountain Bothies Association and the Munro Society.

Nigel Hawkins, former Chief Executive of the Trust, said: "Irvine has

brought back from his explorations a love of wild places that he has communicated with consummate skill and conviction. His books on our mountains, enriched by hundreds of his own superb photographs, have been a mighty inspiration to walkers and climbers, leading them on to share Irvine's passion."



Irvine is the subject of the latest DVD to be produced in the Munro Society's series of interviews with early Munroists. Irvine is the 105th Munroist and completed on Ladhar Bheinn in 1971.

## Family shares Award story on the web

Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share are the four challenges facing John Muir Award participants. When the

Farmer family undertook their Award they decided the best way to share the experience was through their own website. Keira,

9, and Euan, 6, along with their parents, David and Helen, set out to do their discovering around Sanna Bay on the Ardnamurchan peninsula. Their exploration area included the remains of an ancient volcanic crater at Achnaha.

At home in Peebles, the family has plenty of access to the countryside but David and Helen wanted the children to experience something more than open-air exercise. "We wanted the children to think about what it means to be outdoors," says Helen. "It is more than just a big adventure playground."

Wild camping, navigation, studying plants and animals and finding out about local history were just some

of the family's activities. They always tried to minimise their impact on the environment - but noise pollution proved the greatest challenge. "Children sometimes don't have a volume control," says Helen. "We had to remind them that they didn't have to shout."

The children are keen on computing and a website seemed the obvious way to tell their story. Keira and Euan used the website to share

their experiences with schoolmates on the classroom smart board. "Everyone tried the Wild Camper Quiz but not everybody turned out to be a natural wild camper," says Keira. But the school has picked up the John Muir Award message and some teachers and parents have been keen to learn more.

Visit the Farmers' John Muir Award site at

→ [www.dhfarmer.co.uk/jmaward/](http://www.dhfarmer.co.uk/jmaward/)



1 On the summit of Meall Sanna: David, Euan and Keira Farmer (Photo: Helen Farmer)

2 Irvine Butterfield with his Lifetime Achievement Award presented at the Dundee Mountain Film Festival by John Muir trustee John Donohoe, left, and former Chief Executive Nigel Hawkins, right. (Photo: Sam Baumber)

A survey of young people participating in the John Muir Award scheme has found that 92% felt they had achieved something and 95% said that most of the time they were enjoying themselves. For 72% the experience of the Award made them want to visit more natural places. The research, conducted by Dr Richard Mitchell of the University of Glasgow, was designed to assess the impact of the John Muir Award experience on the health-related behaviours, attitudes and aspirations of the participants.

## John Muir Award increases enthusiasm for wild places

There is growing interest in the salutogenic – health-giving – properties of ‘outdoor’ environments. Currently there is more anecdotal than scientific evidence to show that the outdoors make people healthier, rather than being a place where healthy people go. It is known that people who spend time in natural environments as children are more likely to do so as adults with their own children.

The three-year Glasgow study followed the experience of more than 300 Award participants, aged from 8 to 18, who filled in questionnaires before starting their Award

experience; whether it altered their aspirations for future contact with wild places; and whether it had an impact on their self-esteem and other attitudes and behaviours which we know are good predictors of the extent to which their lifestyles will be healthier as adults. In particular, we were curious about the different responses of boys and girls to their experience and of those from relatively wealthy and relatively poor backgrounds.”

Nearly one participant in ten had never visited a wild place before. This was strongly related to family background.

## 23% OF AWARD PARTICIPANTS FROM THE POOREST BACKGROUNDS HAD NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF WILD PLACES . . .

activity, on its conclusion and again, an average of 18 months later. Other Award participants took part in focus groups to provide further feedback.

Dr Mitchell says: “We had no illusions that doing the John Muir Award would magically turn participants into super-fit, highly confident youngsters who shun the lures of cigarettes and alcohol in favour of Munro-bagging. However, we wanted to know the extent to which participants valued

23% of Award participants from the poorest backgrounds had no previous experience of wild places compared with 4% of the rest. One of the study’s goals was to discover whether the experience of the Award made the participant want to visit more natural places. Interviews conducted with children before they took part in the Award showed that those already with experience of wild places were more likely to want to continue the



experience in later life than those who had none. However, after taking part in the Award, there was a big increase in this aspiration among those from the poorest background, with least prior experience. Subsequent surveys found that this attitude persisted some 18 months after completing the Award.

Girls and boys equally enjoyed and valued their Award experience and felt a sense of achievement from it. Involvement led to increased aspirations for contact with natural environments, which has been shown in other research to help protect and improve health. That this effect was strongest for young people from the most deprived communities gives the Award additional policy significance because these are often the hardest groups to reach and support.

Participants learned about conservation and the environment and many subsequently aspired to continue that interest into adulthood. Many also learned they could succeed in tasks they felt daunted by initially, and that working as part of a team of friends was rewarding.

Nonetheless, participation in the John Muir Award did not lead to any demonstrable and

sustained shift in attitudes to physical activity or to a demonstrable rise in visits to wild places. The researchers believe this is probably because the respondents are not in control of their decision making, requiring a combination of parental time, permission, company and transport. Getting people into wild places is therefore not just a matter of showing them how good it is. There is obviously a range of logistical and social issues to be addressed as well.

The Award experience was successful at introducing people to wild places and helping to establish aspirations for healthy behaviours. In this, it complements three of the Scottish Government’s strategic objectives for a Healthier, Greener and Smarter Scotland. By itself, the Award cannot always translate aspiration into actual behaviour but the Award has the potential to make a highly cost-effective contribution to furthering these goals.

The research was funded by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health. Further information can be obtained from the John Muir Trust website [www.jmt.org](http://www.jmt.org) or by e-mail from Dr Mitchell [R.Mitchell@clinmed.gla.ac.uk](mailto:R.Mitchell@clinmed.gla.ac.uk)

A scenic landscape photograph of a mountain range with snow patches and a stone wall in the foreground. The title 'The Beat of Heart Stones' is overlaid in white serif font. The author's name 'LINDA CRACKNELL' is centered below the title in a smaller, all-caps sans-serif font.

# The Beat of Heart Stones

LINDA CRACKNELL

My heart's heaving, after bursting upwards from the road like that. Anxious to meet the thaw, I'm like a diver surfacing. I seek upwards towards the membrane where freezing fog thins, guided by a miasma of blue.

Out into sparkle and the line of dyke keening up the hillside, I stop and gasp cut glass air. Feathers of ice float onto my hot face and hands, melt pin-stings on my skin, summoning my eyes upwards to find that frosted birches are shedding ice-down as they warm. I lean back against the dyke, hands on its grating rock. Let me get my breath, then I'll be able to hear above the blood pulsing in my ears. Was that a sigh?

The dyke climbs so steeply here with the dark plantation squeezing in from behind me, to the east. Silvery in this winter sunlight, bold and strong, it plants a ton of stone into the ground with each yard of advance. The copse of birches which bend towards the dyke on its windswept westerly side has given it a humid start. Bright moss blankets its foundations and crawls across the topside of the through-stones which protrude every few feet.

So finally I'm here. Over the years my eye's been teased up from the road by the dyke's unswerving strike towards the summit of Schiehallion. It's posed questions, demanded that my feet follow. I've my breath back, so I'll go on, follow this calling

line for its one and a half miles, the twenty six degrees SSE up the north face that it insists on.

*Twenty seven.*

Sorry?

Silence.

Not even an utter of wind today.

Here, beyond the trees, they chose a different type of rock - black and plate-thin rather than square and glittering grey. As if it hasn't seen the light for years.

*Six.*

Eh?

*Hundred.*

That sounded like a yawn.

*Million.*

Did you speak?

*Six hundred million years ago...*

What?

*... you'd have needed your snorkel.*

What for?

*nguhhh*

Sorry, did I wake you?

*To see the beginnings of that stone you touch.  
Before it joined this scaly mosaic.*

You were underwater?

*The part of me you put your hand on now was a forest of sea lilies then, wafting their tendrils in the currents.*

Oh.

*Limestone. Dug from that hollow over there. The scar's grassed over now. It's only a patch, an outcrop, floated down from the limestone pavements.*

And are you limestone the rest of the way?

*I'm the earth turned inside out - a display of what ever's under the turf.*

I see.

*You don't want to find out for yourself? To walk with me.*

Of course. It's a beautiful day. I've my breath back. Two or three hours to spare.

*Huh.*

So they used whatever was close by? Here's a block of quartz, the glitter of mica schist. Here a seaweed green section, here bare grey.

*What the Earth spits out. Would you want to heave it far across the hills? You don't look very strong.*

Looks can be...

*It was weans and women and tinkers hauled these rocks - left them in a rickle each side of*



*the line, within reach of the hands building my long slow uphill spine.*

Whose hands?

*One craftsman each side. Raising two inward-leaning walls that kissed just before they were capped. Think of the men as you walk.*

I am.

*Quick-handed, with eyes sharpened for measuring. They saw at a glance how one stone would nudge and slide against another, the shape and ache of a gap.*

I see that. There are big square straight-edged blocks at your feet here. But halfway up's a massive L-shaped rock, waves caught in its texture. It must have taken two to lift into place. And small flat rocks pack against its non-conforming curves, insist again on the horizontal lines. It's like art.

*They made it a rule – never pick up a stone more than once. Assess them where they lie.*

A waste of effort?

*If you're being paid by the yard.*

What were they like?

*Men with fat fingers.*

Black thumbnails?

*As they worked, memories of their great-great-grandfathers swung their thoughts over their shoulders. Aye, ancestors with the same blackened thumbnails. Your fingers look slim and weak.*

Look how I stride along next to you though, as you ride the waves of the land. Why on earth don't you go around these hillocks? You seem sinuous enough to take a detour.

*I'm a march boundary.*

Following a line older than yourself? Why do you laugh?

*The natural push upwards of bed rock between Lassintullich and East Tempar. That's what I rest on. An ancient march.*

Why was it so important to have a wall? It must have been costly.

*O, disputes leaving blood pooled on rock. Beasts to keep in. Or out. The usual things that spread a web of stone lines 500,000 miles across our lands.*

I see trails worn in the earth by your side. So I'm not the first here. Whose beat am I following?

*Come back in the dark and you'll see how*

*they all use me as a corridor, the four-footed ones – wood mice, voles, hares – sheltering from the owls, making their chambers inside me. They treat me as a larder too. The fox slinking alongside me for his supper.*

The rabbit I suppose?

*Have you not seen my smoots – the rabbit-sized doorways they built through me?*

That's very kind-hearted. A design to let them through.

Careful. That laughter's shuddering your coping stones. You'll lose even more of them.

*I've no intention of losing them.*

They look vulnerable, that's all, at that angle, like leaning book spines on a shelf. And you must admit, one or two have already tumbled, especially where the trees have snatched at them. In places your ridge is like a mountain range. The surviving coping stones are free-standing pinnacles.

Huh.

What were the smoots for then? I obviously got the 'kindness' wrong.

*Kind to the hungry man perhaps – the one who opened the trap door on my other side and pulled out his dinner by its ears.*

Of course.

*Aye, you're following the rabbit-lifter. And the one who comes once a year for our promenade together. He notes the topples and sags, where to send the dyker in for repairs.*

You need attention each year?

*Pah! I can stand tall for a hundred and fifty without a human touch.*

Of course.

Although, with respect, you haven't.

When was he last here – your promenade partner?

*A blink ago. Perhaps forty years. Or fifty. It's got quiet. In the old days I had that many human hands on me.*

And now?

*The likes of you. The odd walker who's lost the path.*

I'm not lost, I came on purpose.

Or scientists.

For your lichens? It's as though you've gone rusty in the rain, or someone's dabbed



fluorescent green paint on you, or fine white corals have fastened in your grooves and contours. This rosette here of filigree lichen, the imprint of a jelly-fish stranded on a beach. Here, leopard spots of black on orange. My fingertips – OK I admit they're soft – pick up antique lace, porcelain. The flat of my hand sucks up a deep cold, a coarse graze. And this sunshine on the grain of the rock draws the lines of an old man's face. How does it feel to be so many things at once?

*Of course you've overlooked my best mosses by staying on the sunny side. 'Unique,' they mutter, the ones who come with magnifying glasses and sample bottles. Scrape, scrape, scrape. Lean over, take a look.*

Your dark side. I see the mole-coat growing over your stones.

*You can lean on me a little more. Use your hands and feet.*

Really, won't I disturb...? God, that's gross.

What?

Something lurid as orange peel's growing over the most shadowed faces.

*You're easily put off.*

Where are you going now, plunging down this gully? You kink your spine over a knoll, then reverse it to loop low into the frosty hollow, and then curl out again. You make it look effortless, your vertebrae tapering and expanding to allow the rolls. And look at this steepest section, how the stones still

run horizontal to the hill, and, oh ... it's OK, I'm OK.

*Slippery?*

How do you stay so solid?

*I have a heart.*

Having a heart makes you solid? I've one too.

*That, and this deep downward longing that holds me to the Earth.*

Gosh - a heart and longing, you almost sound human. And you, so close to the Heart of Scotland! Tell me, what makes up a dyke's heart?

*Muscles and blood vessels.*

No!

No.

Stones, I suppose.

*Small ones, packed carefully to hold my two walls away from each other, to compose my still, strong places from the inside. The places that began as secret and that I surrender over time.*

What do you mean?

*See this sag in me here - this collapsing inwards?*

It takes you off your true course. You're like an eel in a burn.

*Wheesht, they'd be angry if they heard that, my makers. Not quite, not yet that bad. A bit of settling doesn't undermine me.*

What then?

*Where the moles have vibrated the earth around me, loosening stones. Where the snow has squeezed its way into the gaps under my capstones. Freeze, thaw, freeze, thaw. Together they've shuggled my heart-stones downwards, hollowed out my heart. Then in have crept the mice and voles, the adders slithered in to hibernate, the squirrels found their places to hoard winter feasts. Snails, spiders, you name for me who hasn't nestled into my heart. And with the small inner stones pushed down so low, my walls have sunk inwards, squeezing their weight towards each other where my heart should be.*

It sounds like your heart's alive.

*And yours is dead?*

I'm human.

*And that speaks for itself?*

Look!

*You expect me to see it?*

A pure white stoat.

*I feel it though.*

It just poked its head out, and bobbed inside again.

*Your noise scattered it away. Follow me uphill, it'll come out again further up. I feel it wriggling through my soul, running through my heart where it hides and hunts.*

Doesn't it hurt?

*Paws on me, skin, suckers, roots. Inside, outside. Hands on me. That's what I am. They put their prints on me and I carry their impression, outlive them.*

Just think of the festival of my creation.

Those men with the measuring eyes and black thumbnails?

*Them and the tinkers, camped up against me each night wherever they stopped work. Their horses, the stone-draggers, on their hobbles. It took them time to travel my whole length. You're only about halfway.*

I think I need a sandwich.

*Put your hand inside me, and you'll find the bottles the two men left at the end of each day rather than carry them down again. Eight yards between them.*

You must have looked so fine when you were first built.

*An eyesore they said. Soil-smearred rock. An infringement on the landscape, an insult to the eye. And the ground on each side of me left sparkling with the shards of stone trimmed off to make that snug fit between them. Like elf-arrows, they said, and kept away.*

And now look at you.

*The rain and wind soon bared me, but the fine lichen has taken its time at the gilding.*

You blend in so well.

*My downfall perhaps.*

Oh?

*There's not many admire me enough, notice me enough, to help me stand.*

Not the farmers?

*It's cheaper to stretch wire across stakes. Look at me and you'll know the state of farming. A decline, and my collapse begins. This time I may never get up again.*



But that's terrible. So your enemies are the moles and the ice. What about the trees?

*All of them collude with the pull of the Earth, that longing I spoke of. The wind-tossed, unruly branches begin something, jostle my capstones. Then come the leaping deer scraping sharp hooves over me, beating their ways back and forth across the hill where they spy weakness, an opportunity to pass.*

*Has the sadness stopped you in your tracks?*

*Perhaps you'll lift my scattered stones, then?*

I don't know how.

Try.

Well. Perhaps this one. Could go here. Oh, too big. Or this one? No, sorry. Maybe this one.

*You're right.*

What?

*You don't know how.*

I'll walk you anyway. It's a kind of homage.

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#### THE AUTHOR

■ The essay from which this article is extracted is part of a larger project Linda undertook on 'walking and writing' enabled by a Creative Scotland Award (supported by the National Lottery through the Scottish Arts Council). Other walks have included a Scottish drove road and mediaeval paths in Spain. Her short story collection, *The Searching Glimpse*, was published in 2008.

She is currently editing an anthology on people and wild places – see page 6.

#### NEXT ISSUE

■ In the next edition of the Journal we will be publishing some of the winning entries in the John Muir Trust 2009 Wild Writing Festival.



# Who's afraid...?

PETER CAIRNS

It seems that on the political highway of hype and propaganda, the place to be is in the middle lane. Don't veer too far left or right; don't commit to 'yes' or 'no'; don't opt for black or white, just stick with grey. In a political climate driven by ultra-conservatism (small 'c'), radicalism is a non-starter: the goal is to keep as many of the people happy for as much of the time as possible. The result: toothless policies that, in the wider scheme of things, make little difference to anyone.

Conservation in recent years has been charting new waters. The principal players – and the John Muir Trust rightly aspires to this group – are now less governed by science and ecology than by politics. In the drive to generate sufficient membership to sway political policy and the quest to out-manoeuvre competitors over what our landscape should look like and which species it should contain, it is easy to lose sight of one's founding principles.

It's probably unfair to levy such an accusation at the John Muir Trust – just yet anyway. But it's inevitable that conservation policies in general become more 'middle lane' to retain not only popular support but also 'acceptance' in the political arena where maverick ideas are unwelcome. Cynical? Perhaps.

Notwithstanding local and even national successes, on a global scale conservation is fighting a losing battle. Hence there has been a cultural shift from species-specific management in protected areas to the more ambitious ethos of ecological restoration – rebuilding functioning ecosystems across large, inter-connected areas. Fair enough, but what does this 'rebuilt' landscape look like? What is it modelled on? And which species should it contain?

As an "independent adviser to Governments on wild land issues in the UK" (John Muir Trust 10-year vision), these are questions that the Trust must be able to answer. In Fran Lockhart's recent article *Helping nature heal itself* (Journal 45), she refers to the Trust's effort in "trying to recreate the majestic forests of the past." In the same piece, she highlights the lack of nutrients in upland rivers and points to the interdependence of riparian woodland, insect abundance, fish productivity and so on up the food chain. All well and good, but is it not the case that to restore an ecosystem to a previously healthier condition, all the component parts that created

that ecosystem must be present? And so to the touchy subject of reintroductions.

Lynx, wolves and even bears continue to spread across Europe and advocates for the return of lost species here are quick to point out our obligation under EU legislation to aid their recovery. Whatever your perspective on this may be, the ecological significance of predator-prey processes is becoming more apparent and it's fair to say that the developing debate is not going away any time soon. So how does the Trust stand on this political hot potato? It is undoubtedly a 'wild land issue'. Is there perhaps a bit of fence-sitting going on? Is the Trust juggernaut sat in that middle lane?

I think so. But, disappointingly, John Muir Trust is by no means alone. Notwithstanding the obvious and understandable sensitivity of this issue, there must surely come a point for any credible conservation organisation to digest the science, consider the cultural climate and decide on a policy – either way.

For the record, I'm no wolf or bear fanatic but I do believe that without healthy ecosystems our own species will eventually get bitten on the backside – maybe not in my lifetime but sooner or later. And so I'm puzzled when the likes of the Trust talk about restoring functioning ecosystems but resist the inclusion of certain components – those 'inconvenient' components that might just jeopardise political standing or the sensitivities of certain members, revealed in the last Journal. Can you really expect to have your cake and eat it?

In her article, Fran quoted John Muir himself: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." Would the present policy-makers be thanked for picking out only those bits that suit them and ignoring those that are politically unpalatable? Come on, guys, get out of the middle lane and be true to your principles – John Muir would surely have expected nothing less. ┘

Peter Cairns is a freelance nature photographer whose images and stories appear in a wide variety of media. In addition to documenting Europe's high-profile wildlife species, much of his work focuses on our own relationship with the natural world. Peter is a member of the International League of Conservation Photographers, a founding director of Wild Wonders of Europe and a partner in the Tooth & Claw predator education initiative.

**Muir and More: John Muir,  
his life and walks**

by Ronald Turnbull

Reviewed by Fiona Russell

This is not a travel guide as I had mistakenly expected. It is a small hardback book delightfully enhanced with drawings by Colin Brash.

Turnbull walked the John Muir Way in East Lothian and then the John Muir Trail in California in a single season. The resulting book is an interesting mix that does tell the reader more about Muir and the relevance of his legacy today.

I sensed that *Muir and More* disclosed as much about the author as it did about Muir. Turnbull expresses his experiences of the John Muir Way in somewhat minimal terms. Far more is written on the John Muir Trail. Turnbull's interests and interpretations of the life of not only Muir but other thoughtful and creative individuals such as Thoreau, Whitman and Wordsworth (to name a few) are part of the well researched content.

Turnbull comes across as something of a multi-facetted eccentric as he takes innumerable tangents in this book. The issue of bears is inevitable given the area but there's a lot on geology, on huckleberries, on Muir's naming of lakes, on the measurement of sequoias and even on the lack of appeal of Thoreau's facial hair to the opposite sex. Pantheism is addressed at length in one chapter.

Turnbull makes various observations on his fellow trekkers. Of the young female hikers who stripped off, taking a dip in one of the many lakes beside the Trail, he surmises that Ansell Adams could have enhanced his black and white images by such an addition in the corner of his photos. I remain unsure if this impish

author included the bathers when he took his photo of Cathedral Lake.

The book is certainly a divergence from what I had expected. It covers many topics and is full of fascinating information, making it an engaging read.

Millrace, 2008, £14.95

ISBN: 978-1-902173-27-6

**A Life of Ospreys**

by Roy Dennis

Reviewed by  
Lester Standen

This book is as crammed full of information about ospreys, as the cover is with their portraits. It isn't just a lot of scientific information though. The book also tells a story - the success story of expansion and recolonisation by ospreys. An underlying theme is the author's involvement with osprey conservation over almost 50 years from 1960, when he guarded the famous nest at Loch Garten from egg thieves, to the present when he is still working at the forefront of osprey conservation.

He writes with first-hand knowledge gained from a lifetime's experience of working with ospreys in the wild, punctuating the text with excerpts from his diaries, giving the book an added dimension. Throughout, there are numerous photographs, illustrations, graphs, tables and maps, while the text is highly informative.

Everything one could ever wish to know about these birds seems to be covered in this book. It describes the persecution and decline of the osprey within the British Isles, its period of virtual extinction and sporadic breeding in the first half of the 20th century, and the turn around in its fortunes. One chapter covers breeding and ecology and another migration, ringing and satellite tracking.



A chapter on conservation helpfully describes how not to disturb them accidentally and, after dealing with such issues as the protecting of nests and stealing of their eggs, goes on to describe the purpose and process of building artificial nests.

Roy Dennis was a key figure in the translocation of ospreys to Rutland water during the mid 1990s and a chapter is devoted to this project and the subsequent natural spreading from there

into Wales. Expanding from Britain, he takes the reader on a tour of Europe, describing various osprey populations and conservation projects, then further afield to other continents with different subspecies. Back at home, the last chapter lists the small but growing number of osprey watching centres. The only thing the book doesn't do is actually get you out there watching them, but I'm sure it will inspire many to do so.

Whittles Publishing, £18.99

ISBN: 978-1-904445-26-5

**Backpacker's Britain: volume 4. Central and Southern  
Scottish Highlands by Graham Uney**

Reviewed by John Donohoe

Well, what do you do when you've done all the Munros? Furths? That won't take long. Corbetts, Grahams, Donalds, Dawsons? Stop, stop! Too many lists. Get away from the ticking hordes by just walking among the mountains, pitching your solo tent in an idyllic spot, watching the sunset from the porch, dram in hand.

This is a backpacking guide, fourth in a Cicerone series, covering the mountains and islands between the Great Glen and the Highland Line. It contains 30 walks, mostly two-day but some longer, from easy glen stravaiging to challenging mountain traverses over high remote ranges. The longest is a week-long traverse of the Four-thousanders, starting at Glenmore and finishing in Fort William. Despite what it says in the blurb, there are no walks in the Arrochar Alps, and The Monadhliath and Glen Lyon's hills are a bit under-represented. Apart from this, there is a wide spread of locations and route types. There are interesting excursions to Mull, Islay and Arran. Some quibbles: the photo titled as head of Glen Nevis looks uncannily like the Bealach Dubh from Loch Ossian and the route grading information looks like an afterthought as Appendix 3.

Cicerone Press Ltd, £12 ISBN: 978-1-85284-527-8



**A Sand County Almanac  
 and Sketches Here and There**

by Aldo Leopold

Introduced by John Forster

This book, published 60 years ago, not only gives a memorable account of Leopold's wilderness and land philosophies but also contains some of the finest nature writing of the last century.

Leopold was born in 1887 and trained as a forester and developed his ideas about wilderness and land management working in the South West of the United States. In 1933 his major book, *Game Management*, was published. Soon after, he was appointed Professor of Game Management by the University of Wisconsin and two years later, the family bought a small farm in Sand County, Wisconsin, which provided the title and much of the material for *A Sand County Almanac*. In 1948 Leopold died of a heart attack while helping neighbours fight a grass fire.

*A Sand County Almanac* is in three parts. The first comprises essays for each month in the life of Sand County. The second, 'The Sketches', describes Leopold's visits to other places in North America. In the third, 'The Upshot', he develops his philosophy of land conservation.

The first words of the book set out his approach: "There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot. Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them . . . For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech." Much of the Almanac sets out to enhance our perception of the natural world. 'Thinking like a mountain' is one of his greatest essays. He reflects on the call of the wolf and describes how "every living thing . . . pays heed to that call." The howl reminds the deer

of death, gives the coyote "a promise of gleanings to come", threatens the cowman with bankruptcy. "Yet," he says, "behind these immediate hopes and fears there lies a deeper meaning, known only to the mountain itself. Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf." Leopold describes how he changed his thinking about wolves when he shot one. "I was young then, I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise" but after looking into the eyes of the dying wolf, he sensed "that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view." Since then, he continues, he has seen state after state extirpate its wolves and has "watched the face of many a newly wolfless mountain and seen the south-facing slopes wrinkle with a maze of new deer trails. I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed to death." He concludes: "just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer."

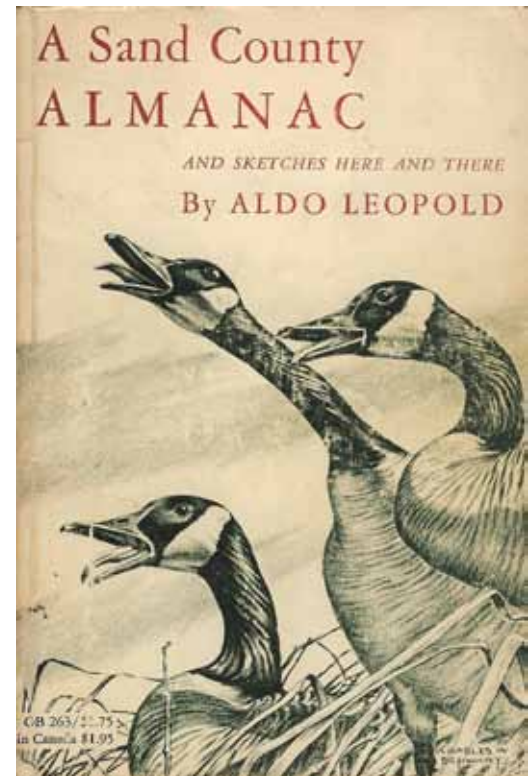
In 'The Upshot', Leopold brings together his philosophy under four themes: 'The Conservation Aesthetic', 'Wildlife in American Culture', 'Wilderness' and 'The Land Ethic'.

In the 'Conservation Aesthetic', he shows how providing facilities for recreation can lead to the destruction of the qualities



sought by the recreationalist. He concludes that "recreational development is a job not of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind".

In 'Wilderness', Leopold writes: "I'm glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in. Of what avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?" He develops three arguments to preserve wilderness: for recreation, for science, and for wildlife.



The Land Ethic contains some of Leopold's most memorable writing. He argues that the scope of ethics should be extended to man-land relations: "The land ethic changes the role of homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it". The absence of a land ethic means that in man-land relations people still do only what is profitable to themselves and ignore actions which have broader benefit to the whole community. He concludes: "Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and aesthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

If you are committed to wild country and have not read this book, you must do so.

**NEXT TIME**

■ The 'Classic Text' in the next Journal will feature *I Return to Scotland* by Stuart Petre Brodie Mais.

Readers are invited to suggest classic environmental texts to revisit.

Photo: Courtesy of the Aldo Leopold Foundation Archives

**THE REVIEWER**

■ John Forster joined the Nature Conservancy Council in NE Scotland the year after *A Sand County Almanac* was published, providing him with "an extremely important background text". He has subsequently worked for Aberdeen University and, since 2002, has been a sustainability consultant.

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## AERIAL PHOTOS FOR SALE

## The view from above

The aerial view of the Black Cuillin (pictured below) is available as the first of a Skyview poster range of Scottish Mountains, published by Globalmapping Ltd, courtesy of XYZ Digital Map Company ([www.xyzmaps.com](http://www.xyzmaps.com)). The John Muir Trust receives a donation from sales.

Aerial photography posters of this and John Muir Trust estates, as featured on the inside back cover of this and future Journals, are available online.

→ [www.jmt.org/shop](http://www.jmt.org/shop)



## 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](http://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](http://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.

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of the John Muir Trust Journal will be published in October 2009. Copy should be sent to the Editor, Mike Brown, at [journal@jmt.org](mailto:journal@jmt.org) or to 'Drumcreel', Kirk Road, New Galloway, Castle Douglas DG7 3RS to arrive by 17 August 2009.



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