

JOHN MUIR TRUST

# JOURNAL

49 AUTUMN 10

- 08 Introducing the Trust's new Vision
- 16 Rising to the wild land challenge
- 22 Safeguarding natural wonders in Borneo

JOHN  
MUIR  
TRUST

FOR  
*wild* LAND &  
*wild* PLACES



# Our essential wildness

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

Turn to page eight for more on our Vision ...



**REGULARS**

- 02 Foreword from the Chief Executive
- 04 News round-up
- 28 Classic texts  
Waterlog, Roger Deakin
- 29 Book reviews  
The Weekend Fix; Ben Nevis – Britain's Highest Mountain;  
Journeys in the Wilderness: a John Muir Reader
- 30 Opinion: A modest form of rebellion  
Niall Benvie on why wildness matters to him
- 32 Our properties: Li and Coire Dhorrcail  
Personal reflections on the Trust's Knoydart property

**FEATURES**

- 08 Clarity of purpose  
Introducing the Trust's new Vision
- 12 Boosting biodiversity  
Highlights from year three of the Trust's Biodiversity Project
- 14 Wild things  
How we can help the cause of the Scottish wildcat
- 16 Rising to the wild land challenge  
Get involved in the Trust's Wild Land Campaign
- 20 The uses of freedom  
A look at what we stand to lose if wild land is allowed to disappear
- 22 Reef restoration  
Working to save Borneo's celebrated coral reefs
- 24 Wild writing competition 2010  
The winning entry from this year's competition
- 26 Wilder Britain, wilder us  
An important new photography-based conservation initiative

**JOURNAL 49, AUTUMN 10**

Editor: Richard Rowe

EMAIL: [journal@jmt.org](mailto:journal@jmt.org)

Design and production: Various Creative

EMAIL: [ask@various.uk.com](mailto:ask@various.uk.com)

This Journal is printed on Revive 100 Uncoated stock, a recycled grade paper containing 100% post-consumer waste and manufactured at a mill accredited with ISO 14001 environmental management standard. The pulp used in this product is bleached using an Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF) process. We use a Scottish printer, Thomson Colour, who have excellent environmental credentials, achieving environmental standard ISO 4001 in 2006 and the FSC and PEFC standards in 2006.

If you would rather receive your publications from the John Muir Trust electronically, please email [membership@jmt.org](mailto:membership@jmt.org)

The John Muir Trust is a Scottish charitable company limited by guarantee. Registered office: Tower House, Station Road, Pitlochry PH16 5AN  
Charity No. SC002061  
Company No. SC081620

**LEITH OFFICE**

John Muir Trust  
41 Commercial Street,  
Edinburgh EH6 6JD  
TELEPHONE: 0131 554 0114  
FAX: 0131 555 2112

**PITLOCHRY OFFICE**

John Muir Trust  
Tower House, Station Road,  
Pitlochry PH16 5AN  
TELEPHONE: 01796 470 080  
FAX: 01796 473 514

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

Cover photography  
Sron Ulladale, Glen Ulladale, Harris

Inside front cover photography  
Quinag from the west

PHOTOGRAPHY: KEITH BRAME



PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

# From the Chief Executive

**Stuart Brooks** introduces the latest edition of the Journal – one that takes a particularly close look at the development of the Trust’s new Vision

Welcome to the autumn edition of the John Muir Trust Journal. In this edition we are placing particular emphasis on our new Vision document which we have entitled ‘Our Essential Wildness’. At a time in our history when wild land is coming under unprecedented threat from large-scale industrialisation, when we face the challenge of rapid changes to our climate, and suffer a continuing disconnection between people and nature, we felt the need to say something and urge others to take action.

As the title suggests, the central theme of our Vision is that wild land, wild places and the qualities of wildness they enshrine should not be seen as a luxury or a recreational abode of the elite and enlightened few. Muir himself wrote that “wildness is a necessity; that mountains, parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and for irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life”.

It is extremely encouraging that governments in the UK are now at least recognising that wild land does indeed have an important part to play in providing us all with valuable ecosystem goods and services such as clean air, carbon storage and clean water.

However, we should not let this growing recognition obscure or override the other essential qualities that make these places so special to us. We should not shy away from the fact that we care about things and are prepared to invest in their conservation because we gain huge enjoyment and spiritual renewal from them. Why do people climb mountains, tour spectacular scenery, or wild camp next to the sea? They do it because the wild quality of nature provides them with something that cannot be found elsewhere. They are visiting Muir’s “fountains of life” and their lives are more enriched for it.

Our Vision exists to provide clarity of purpose for the Trust and leadership to others who may be convinced by our arguments. I hope that it also provides a clear rationale for why we own and manage land, influence decision makers and encourage thousands of people from all walks of life to experience wild places through the John Muir Award.

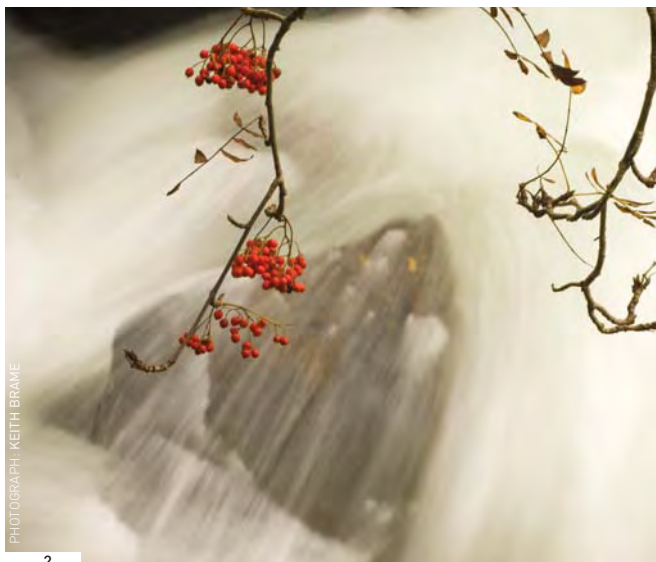
This Vision has been shaped by the views of our staff, trustees, supporters and hundreds of members who responded to a consultation earlier in the year through our e-broadcasts. We are extremely grateful for these contributions and I hope that the end product has done the process justice. Please see page eight for more.

I do hope that you can also find time to read the other articles in this edition of the Journal. We have tried to pick up on some of the key themes in the Vision – from managing wild land and the challenges faced on our own properties to the conservation story of the wild cat, a true icon of the wild.

Elsewhere, we highlight progress with our Wild Land Campaign as it gathers momentum in its mission to increase protection for the best areas of wild land, while there are also plenty of other articles that showcase the inspirational dimension of the wild.

Enjoy the Journal and, as always, we welcome your feedback.

**Stuart Brooks**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
JOHN MUIR TRUST



PHOTOGRAPHY: KEITH BRAVE

## Photography

- 1 Loch Coruisk, Isle of Skye
- 2 Rowan berries in the Nevis gorge, Glen Nevis

### INDEPENDENCE DAY

Friends of Nevis, originally the volunteer and subscription arm of The Nevis Partnership, recently received notification of its successful application for charitable company status.

The newly-independent organisation was re-launched on 1 October to coincide with the official launch of The Nevis Partnership's new book, *Nevis - The Ben and the Glen*, produced as part of the ongoing Glen Nevis Sense of Place project. The new publication covers the history, geology and geography of the area, as well as exploring aspects of the Ben's impact on the local community and visitors today.

All proceeds from the book, which retails at £7.95, will be donated to Friends of Nevis to support the ongoing efforts to maintain and protect the Nevis area.

(See the next issue of the Journal for a review of *Nevis - The Ben and the Glen* and also turn to page 29 for a review of another book dedicated to the rich mountaineering history of the Ben.)

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

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

### MEMORIAL WEEKEND

Roderick Manson is organising an informal memorial weekend for Irvine Butterfield (*pictured*), the highly-respected writer, photographer, JMT founder member and Trustee and recipient of the John Muir Lifetime Achievement Award. The gathering, to be held on the weekend of 3-6 December, will be based at Torridon Youth Hostel near Loch Clair where Irvine's ashes are scattered. For more details, contact Roderick at

→ [roderickmanson@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:roderickmanson@yahoo.co.uk)



PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN HOWETT

### LIZ SCALES THE HEIGHTS

Congratulations to Liz Auty, the Trust's Biodiversity Officer, who climbed Schiehallion on 4 September to raise funds for the John Muir Trust and Pelvic Instability Network Scotland (PINS).

The climb was a huge achievement for Liz who became disabled in 2008 through a condition known as Pelvic Girdle Pain – a condition of the pelvic joints caused, in her case, by pregnancy. The condition left her virtually unable to walk and in severe pain.

"I went from being quite an active person to not being able to go walking as a family without having to arrange for someone to take me out," explained Liz. "Effectively, I missed out on two years of experiencing wild places."

Liz has now made a full recovery following months of physical therapy and a training course called the Lightning Process – with the climbing of the 1,083-metre high Schiehallion a celebration of her return to fitness.

The Trust's biodiversity monitoring work has also benefited greatly from Liz getting back on her feet. "It's hard to do my job without getting out onto the ground and knowing what the conditions are like on each property. Now that I'm able to get hands-on with habitat monitoring it is much easier to interpret data coming in from the land managers."

PINS is a Scottish charity dedicated to helping people affected by the condition. It aims to increase awareness of Pelvic Girdle Pain, also known as Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction (SPD), and to provide support to those affected.

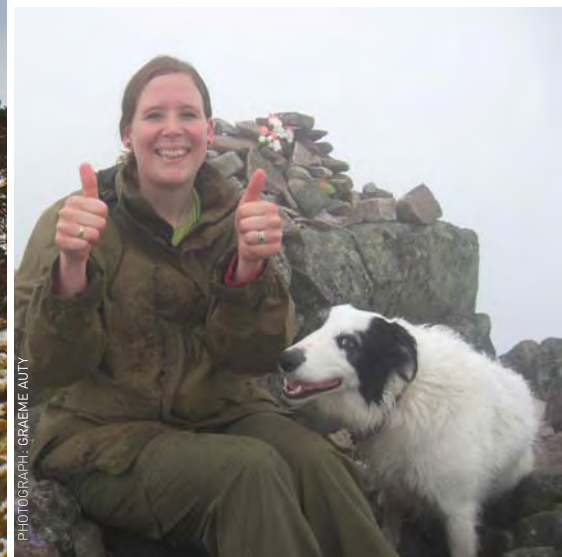
For those who would like to donate, Liz is raising funds at:

→ [www.justgiving.com/Schiehallion-challenge-PINS](http://www.justgiving.com/Schiehallion-challenge-PINS)

→ [www.justgiving.com/Schiehallion-challenge-JMT](http://www.justgiving.com/Schiehallion-challenge-JMT)



PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME



PHOTOGRAPH: GRAEME AUTY

### FUNDING SUCCESS

Borders Forest Trust has been successful in its application for funding through the Scottish Government and European Union's Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) for woodland habitat creation at Corehead Farm near Moffat in the Borders.

The Trust has been awarded almost £928,000 to create 194 hectares of new native woodland planting in three valleys at Corehead. Planting is scheduled to begin this autumn with native species such as oak, ash, birch, willow, rowan, hazel and holly set to create new woodlands that will provide a valuable habitat for wildlife and a place for people of all ages to enjoy. Part of the SRDP funding will also go towards improving access on site, creating paths and installing finger post signs for walkers.

"This award will enable one of the south of Scotland's most significant conservation projects to get underway," commented Willie McGhee, Director of Borders Forest Trust. "We plan to restore the woodlands that once cloaked the hills and valleys at Corehead, creating a new and diverse landscape across the Southern Uplands."

Borders Forest Trust took ownership of 1,580 acres of land at Corehead in July 2009 following a successful public fundraising appeal. The native woodland planting is the first stage in bringing the site into conservation management with the aim of improving its biodiversity value. In the coming years, the Trust also hopes to use traditional agricultural practices and ecological restoration techniques to create wetlands, hay meadows and heather moorland habitats on the land of Corehead.

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

### STEALL BRIDGE REOPENS

Walkers can now access the Mamores without getting their feet wet thanks to the reopening of the wire bridge at Steall in Glen Nevis. The bridge was closed in May after a party of walkers overloaded it, causing one of the foot cables to break.

The bridge has long provided a vital and adventurous link to the nearby Steall bothy and the wider Mamores both for walkers and the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team.

It was important to get this work finished before the Water of Nevis rose to its winter levels. At the moment it is possible to ford the stream on foot, but this is not ideal for everyone, and won't be a safe option for much longer.

→ [www.jmt.org/ben-nevis-estate.asp](http://www.jmt.org/ben-nevis-estate.asp)



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID NOBLE



PHOTOGRAPH BY BORDERS FOREST TRUST

### ▮ BURRENBEO BIRTHDAY

The Burrenbeo Trust will celebrate its second anniversary in December as it continues important work to conserve the Burren (*pictured right*), a spectacular limestone landscape that stretches across North Clare and South Galway in southwest Ireland.

Formed some 340 million years ago at the bottom of a warm, shallow sea, the Burren is known for its profusion of wild flowers (it holds 70% of Ireland's native flora), diverse fauna, rich archaeological heritage and the kind of labyrinthine system of caves, pavements, and wider 'karst' scenery often associated with limestone areas.

Established along similar lines to the John Muir Trust, the core objectives of the Burrenbeo Trust are to encourage a greater appreciation of the Burren as a living landscape of international importance and to promote its conservation and development.

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



PHOTOGRAPHY: BRENDAN DUNFORD

### ▮ DO IT 4 REAL DELIVERS

2010 marks the fourth year of a partnership between YHA (England & Wales) and the John Muir Trust. The key aim of the partnership is to use the John Muir Award to promote engagement with the environment as part of the YHA Do it 4 Real summer camps, which between them attract 10,000 young people aged 10-19 to more than 20 residential centres.

There is plenty of common ground between both organisations: the YHA was set up 'to help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside'.

More than 2,100 John Muir Awards were achieved this year, with a real sense of being an integral part of many camp set-ups (not all camp programmes lend themselves to meeting Award criteria). "It has opened our eyes to the environment," commented Becca, one recent summer camp participant. "I see it as not boring now."

An audit of what campers achieved to meet the Conserve challenge of the Award generated some interesting statistics, including 1,800m<sup>2</sup> of bracken bashing, 180m<sup>2</sup> of watercress beds created and over 6km<sup>2</sup> of heather seed planted – volunteering effort valued at over £50,000 in total.

"It actually is fun – we're not just lying through our teeth to sound good and angelic!" said Matthew, aged 15.

Contact [rob@johnmuiraward.org](mailto:rob@johnmuiraward.org) for a full report, or for a short film visit the John Muir Award YouTube channel, via [www.johnmuiraward.org](http://www.johnmuiraward.org)

### ▮ WIND FARM CONDEMNATION

The John Muir Trust has condemned the Scottish Government's decision to approve the Calliachar wind farm development describing it as yet another serious body blow for the Perthshire landscape.

The Calliachar development consists of 14 turbines, each more than 90 metres high. The combined impact of this development alongside the neighbouring 68-turbine Griffin development and the recently approved 400kV Beaulay-Denny transmission line will lead to an unacceptable visual impact on the landscape of Highland Perthshire.

"This decision adds weight to our Wild Land Campaign, which seeks to provide greater protection for wild land across the UK," commented Helen McDade, Head of Policy for the John Muir Trust. "The combined impact of these developments will turn the area around Glen Quaich and Amulree into an industrial landscape."

The decision comes despite considerable opposition from the local community, many of whom have given up a great deal of time to campaign over the last six years against several industrial-scale developments. "There is an appalling lack of local democracy when people can give years of their lives to protect their local landscape and at the end of it all their views appear to have been given little consideration, particularly with regards to impacts on local tourism," added McDade.

The report accompanying the Government's decision states that the development would have a significant adverse effect on local tourism and related businesses. It states acceptable mitigation of this effect would be achieved by a car park, picnic area, short circular walk and circular cycle walk.

"The Trust is particularly concerned that this development will be visible from Schiehallion, a mountain which attracts up to 20,000 walkers a year," said McDade.

→ [www.jmt.org/wild-land-campaign.asp](http://www.jmt.org/wild-land-campaign.asp)



PHOTOGRAPH: OUTWARD BOUND TRUST/ANN BOUD



## ▮ GROUSE WITH A GRIPE

John Muir Trust member Darren Stonier had a close encounter with a particularly territorial capercaillie while walking in the Cairngorms this summer. The bird jumped onto the footpath in front of him while he was walking into the Lairig Ghru from Loch Morlich.

"I've been walking and climbing in Scotland for many years and have never seen a capercaillie and feel privileged that day to have not only seen one up close, but also to be attacked by one!" commented Darren. "I only took a few photos when it first caught my eye and then as it dropped from the tree in front of us and I attempted to defend myself without causing distress to the bird."

The capercaillie, a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, is a large woodland grouse that occupies native pinewood in Scotland. Male capercaillie can become extremely territorial during the breeding season.

"Darren was very lucky indeed," commented Mike Daniels, Head of Land and Science for the John Muir Trust. "Encounters like this are becoming increasingly rare as capercaillie numbers drop."

In the 1970s, the capercaillie population was believed to stand at around 20,000, but now there are only 1,000 of the birds left in Scotland. Their decline has been blamed on a variety of contributing factors, including habitat destruction through overgrazing, wet springs when eggs and chicks become chilled, predation and collisions with fences.



PHOTOGRAPH: DARREN STONIER



PHOTOGRAPH: SUE SCOTT

## ▮ MARINE WONDERS

A team of marine biologists has begun exploring the Firth of Clyde and surrounding sea lochs as part of a wider study to confirm the presence of some of Scotland's most important marine wildlife features.

The work sees scientists from SeaStar Survey, a marine survey company based in Southampton, chart the quantity, quality and distribution of habitats and species of high conservation importance, known as priority marine features. These include horse mussels, flame shell beds and the rare but beautiful fireworks anemone (*pictured above*).

Scientists are looking to expand their knowledge of marine wildlife in the survey area, which extends from the upper reaches of Loch Fyne south to Campbeltown Loch. It is the latest in a series of studies that have taken place

as part of the Scottish Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Project, a joint initiative between Marine Scotland, Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Other areas being surveyed in 2010 as part of the project include the Ullapool Approaches and the Sound of Canna, which current data suggests are also home to numerous priority marine features, including the rare fan mussel, beds of horse mussels and swards of seagrass.

The survey work is expected to be completed in the autumn with the final report on its findings published next spring. Video clips of some of the priority marine features in the Firth of Clyde can be seen at:

→ [www.snh.gov.uk/priority-marine-features](http://www.snh.gov.uk/priority-marine-features)

# Clarity of purpose

PHOTOGRAPH: IAN ROY

1

The Trust's new Vision document outlines a strategic direction for the future and a clear framework for action. **Stuart Brooks** explains the thinking behind its development

Last year, the John Muir Trust began a journey to portray a vision of the future for wild land and wild places. Such documents can often be seen as an unimaginative corporate product, a necessary box to tick or a glossy distillation of the obvious. I felt very strongly that we needed to do much more than that. Instead, what we needed was a clear and inspirational statement of intent that was unambiguous in its beliefs.

There was a need to highlight who we are, the value of wild places, a positive vision for the future and our role in achieving it. I wanted this to be our calling card – something that could both stand alone and stand the test of time.

The sad truth is that the Trust only exists because there is a need for us, or at least that enough people think that the status quo is not good enough, and that decisions and attitudes in the past and present continue to degrade the things we value.

However, we have deliberately focussed on the future and positive attributes of wild places and their benefits to people rather than the negative context of the present.

Does it matter that we encourage industrial-scale developments in our most scenic areas, that we allow native wildlife to disappear and that our children increasingly live in a world divorced from nature? We think it does and the Vision is our response.

This Vision, entitled 'Our Essential Wildness', is that: "Wild land is protected and enhanced throughout the UK and wild places are valued by all sectors of society."

All very good, but it is not enough just to say it. We must also spell out exactly how we think it can be achieved.



PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD ROWE

2



PHOTOGRAPH: PETER CAIRNS

3

To that end we have identified four key objectives:

**- WILD LAND IS PROTECTED**

There is currently inadequate protection for landscapes in our most important wild land areas. As a result, they are being lost and degraded at an alarming rate. The mapping work we have done highlights that less than 30% of landscapes in the best wild land areas are afforded any protection. The situation is particularly worrying in Scotland. England and Wales fare better as the majority of the best wild land areas are already within National Parks.

**- WILD LAND IS ENHANCED**

Poorly sited and inappropriate man-made structures should be removed to improve the quality of the wild landscape. Restoration of natural processes across large areas of wild land will help to reverse declines in native wildlife. Non-native invasive species should be actively controlled, while previously lost native species should be reintroduced where practical. Water levels in our upland peatlands should be restored and native woodland allowed to expand across large areas of its natural range as a result of reduced grazing pressure from domestic and wild animals. These actions will help provide us all with natural goods and services – clean air, fresh water, efficient carbon storage – and create more robust eco-systems that are better able to adapt to our changing climate.

**- PEOPLE ENGAGE WITH WILD PLACES**

Outdoor learning, with real hands on experience, should be incorporated into all stages of education. The protection and enjoyment of wild places can provide a focus for youth work and community-based activities. Connecting with nature and wild places will improve the health and well-being of our nation, with people supported and encouraged to make these connections – so reversing the current devaluing of wildness by society.

**- COMMUNITIES THRIVE ALONGSIDE WILD LAND**

We firmly believe that the needs of people and communities can be met without destroying the value and special qualities of wild land. Recreational activities such as walking, climbing, eco-tourism and deer stalking should take place in high quality wild land and wild places, providing jobs and income for rural and remote communities. These are challenging environments in which to work, so financial support for farming and forestry must be flexible enough to accommodate the requirements of nature and people. There is also huge potential for communities and individuals to benefit from small-scale renewable energy production to meet their needs.

**FUTURE DIRECTION**

This Vision spells out a long-term ambition, one that builds on the heritage of the John Muir Trust and provides a firm direction for the future. We need to be clear about exactly what we want and not leave it up to others to make assumptions. This is vitally important, particularly when dealing with quite abstract concepts such as ‘wildness’ and when we must fight to legitimise the concept of wild land in mainstream conservation and policy arenas.

We have set the scene in our Vision with a definition of wild land supported by a map (*see overleaf*) showing the spectrum of wildness across the UK. The Trust has been working with the Wildland Research Institute and Leeds University for some time now and the partnership has culminated in the production of this map which will provide the basis for much of our policy and planning work in the future. Although the map shows the full range of wildness across the UK we have identified the top 10% ‘wildest land’. We have pinned our colours to the mast!

Of course, the Trust is much more than just a land conservation organisation and much of our energy and focus is directed towards people, either living or working alongside wild land or those who experience the values of wildness in more accessible wild places, such as our towns and cities. The Vision emphasises our belief that wild land and wild places can be appreciated by people of all ages and backgrounds, not just a fortunate elite. The John Muir Award has enabled us to put this into practice. The map therefore works in another way, to make the point that we have relevance and ambition across the whole of the UK, and across the whole spectrum of wildness.

Given this context there is a real danger that we could lose focus and conduct plenty of meaningful work but spread ourselves too thinly and be ineffective. Part of this process therefore is to be clear about our priorities. For that reason, we have adopted the four components of the Vision to provide the framework for our own priorities and plans.

**THIS VISION SPELLS OUT A LONG-TERM AMBITION, ONE THAT BUILDS ON THE HERITAGE OF THE TRUST**



PHOTOGRAPH BY KEITH BRAME

As such, our priorities for the next few years are listed below and represent our 'pledge for wildness'. We will:

- Protect and improve important areas of wild land throughout the UK through ownership and by working with others, including the development of new land-based partnerships and exploring opportunities for new acquisitions
- Improve the ecological health of wild land through deer management, habitat improvements, woodland restructuring, peatland restoration, as well as implementing and advocating take-up of the Trust's Wild Land Management Standards
- Influence policies and decisions for the benefit of wild land, wild places and people who rely on its protection and sustainable development
- Make the case for designation and improved protection of wild land areas, with much of this work encompassed within our Wild Land Campaign
- Promote awareness, active involvement and respect for wild land and wild places

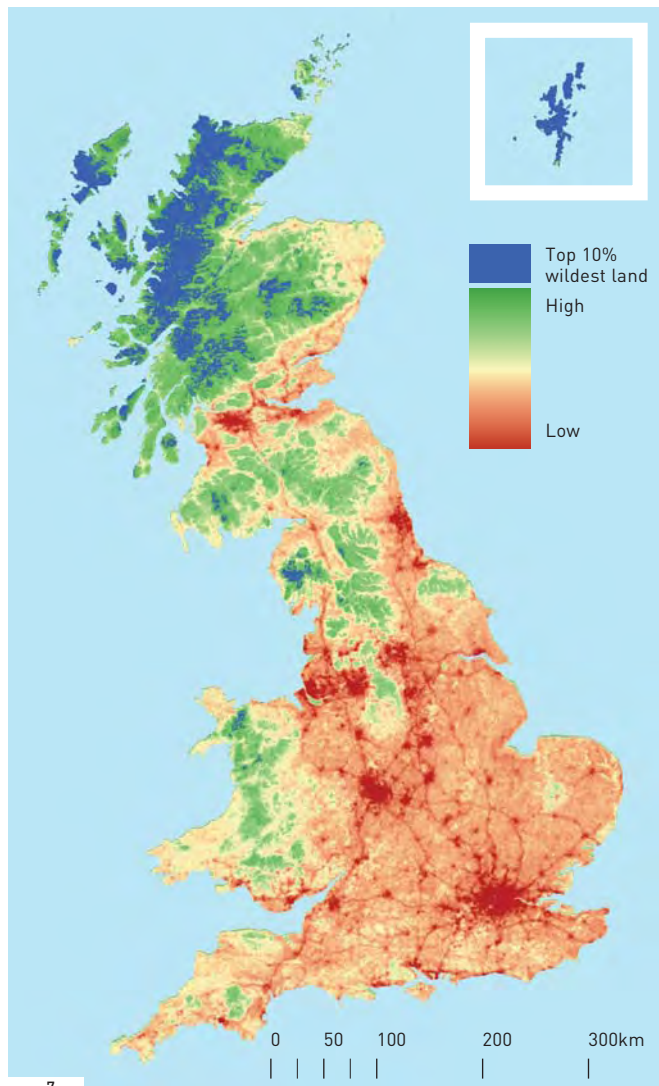
- Develop and promote the John Muir Award across the UK, especially for the young and socially disadvantaged, with particular expansion in England over the coming years
- Work with people and communities that live alongside areas of wild land for mutual benefit
- Engage our members and the wider public in the activities and ambitions of the Trust, the benefits of realising this Vision and the ethos of John Muir

The strength and future of the Trust and our success in achieving this Vision lie in seeing the connections between these elements. Wildness is the common thread.

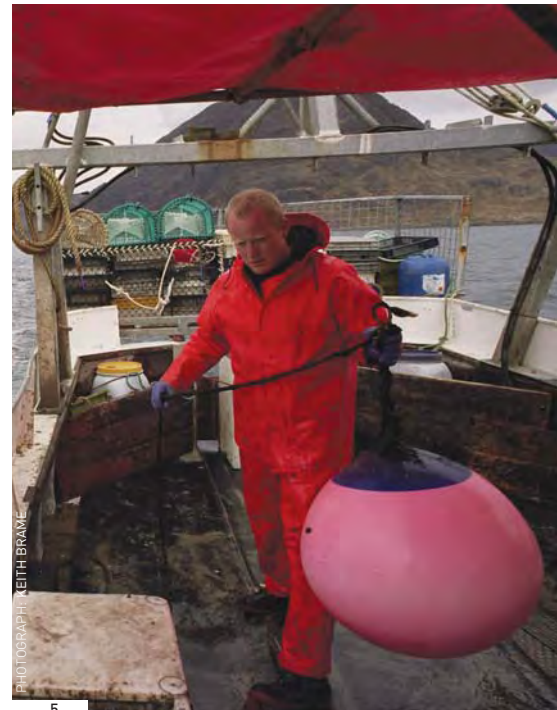
Writing a century ago, Muir emphasised the natural, spiritual and economic value of wildness: "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find that going to the mountain is going home; that wildness is a necessity ..."

His words have fresh resonance today at a time when much of the focus is on the goods and services that nature provides rather than its more ethereal and fundamental qualities. I think we ignore such qualities at our peril. This time we need to listen and take action. □

#### WILD LAND IN BRITAIN



7



5



6

#### About the author

Stuart Brooks is Chief Executive of the John Muir Trust. He can be contacted at [chiefexec@jmt.org](mailto:chiefexec@jmt.org)

#### Further information

A digital version of the Vision is available at [www.jmt.org/vision.asp](http://www.jmt.org/vision.asp) Hard copies are also available on request from Linda Coupar at the Pitlochry office. Contact [linda@jmt.org](mailto:linda@jmt.org), or 01796 470080

#### Photography

- 1 Suilven, Sutherland
- 2 Enjoying the winter conditions, Glen Affric
- 3 Golden eagle – wild land icon
- 4 Fairy Pools, Glen Brittle, Isle of Skye
- 5 Prawn fishing, Elgol, Isle of Skye
- 6 Sea stacks near Sandwood Bay, Sutherland
- 7 A map depicting Britain's remaining areas of wild land

MAP SUPPLIED BY DR STEVE CARVER, WILDLAND RESEARCH INSTITUTE. MAP REPRODUCED FROM ORDNANCE SURVEY MATERIAL WITH THE PERMISSION OF ORDNANCE SURVEY ON BEHALF OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE. CROWN COPYRIGHT.

# Anatom® and the John Muir Trust

Anatom® has been a proud supporter of the John Muir Trust for many years and we are delighted to announce that the Trust will now be our exclusive environmental partner. Anatom® footwear is a culmination of 18 years of building knowledge and understanding of how the foot works both bio-mechanically and physiologically, says **Don Gladstone**, the company's Director of Marketing

## CRADLE2GRAVE

Anatom® has a cradle to grave policy for every shoe or boot built. While we recognise that all footwear must be retired at a certain point, in many cases we are able to re-sole and revive the upper of the footwear to pass it on to one of our charitable social partners.

## THE TRI.ARIA™ SYSTEM

At the core of the brand's whole approach and philosophy to footwear is the Tri.Aria™ system. This sees the amalgamation of three key components – breathability, waterproofing and care – that together create a highly comfortable micro system within our footwear. When combined we naturally achieve 'Interior Comfort. Exterior Performance™'. We are the first footwear brand to develop a range of outdoor footwear where we start the design process from the shape of the foot and work outwards.

## BUILDING AWARENESS OF THE JOHN MUIR TRUST

Because our footwear range has been designed, developed and manufactured to meet the needs of the mountain walker and trekker, our outdoor user appeal is very large indeed. Our new footwear launch is in autumn 2010, but we already have retailers from the north of Scotland to the south east coast of England.

We will be inserting a John Muir Trust leaflet in our boot boxes and have also included details about the Trust on our product information. With the demand already created for our range of boots, we'll be able to reach not only a considerable number of outdoor walkers but also a very specific community of outdoor enthusiasts who have a genuine passion for wild places and their protection.



From this engagement we believe we can make a significant contribution to raising awareness of the Trust's invaluable work and increase its membership numbers.

For further information on the Anatom® range, please contact:

Anatom Ltd  
The Old Barn, 32 Gogarbank,  
Edinburgh EH12 9DE  
TELEPHONE: +44 (0) 800 0323505  
EMAIL: info@anatom.co.uk

The John Muir Trust would like to thank Anatom™ and all our Corporate Members and Supporters.

## GOLD CORPORATE MEMBERS

Anatom®  
Berghaus  
Corrour Estate  
Haggis Adventures  
Highlander (Scotland Ltd)  
Image Scotland  
Mountain Equipment  
Tiso

## SILVER CORPORATE MEMBERS

Ben Nevis Distillery  
HF Holidays  
Profitmaster Systems  
The Ski and Snowboard School

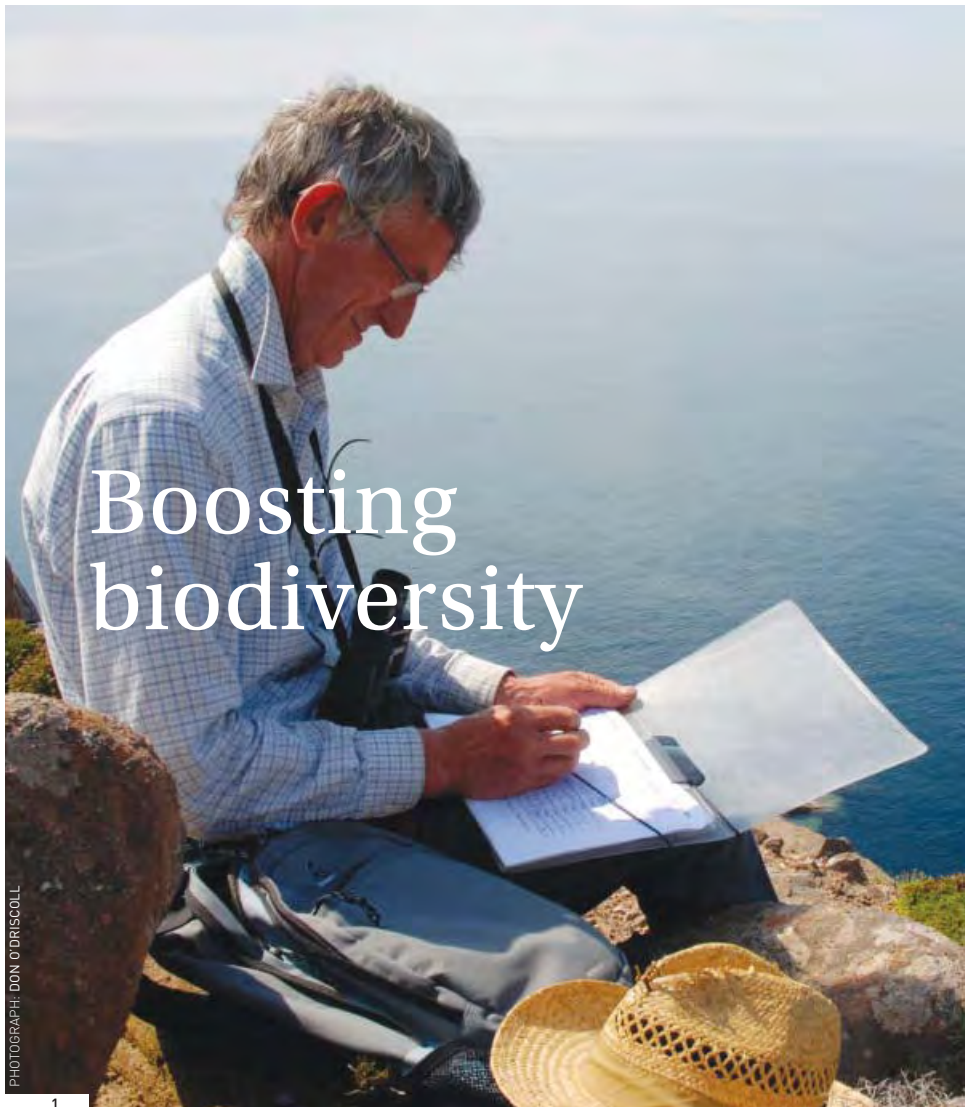
## BRONZE CORPORATE MEMBERS

Alpine Exploratory  
Dandy  
Dewars World of Whisky  
Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival  
Four Seasons Hotel  
George Hotel, Edinburgh  
Highland Adventure Safaris  
Kings Manor Hotel, Edinburgh  
Northshots  
Scotland Calling  
The Watermill, Aberfeldy

## SUPPORTERS

Northern Mountain Sport  
Webducate

We value the contribution of the growing number of companies that support the Trust through membership, donations, promotional initiatives and in-kind support. If your business would like to help our business of protecting wild land and wild places, please contact Fiona Mackintosh on 0131 554 0114 or email [recruit@jmt.org](mailto:recruit@jmt.org)



## Boosting biodiversity

PHOTOGRAPH: DON O'DRISCOLL

1

The Trust recently published a report following the end of year three of its Wild Land Biodiversity Project. **Liz Auty** highlights some of the key achievements to date

Now at the end of its third year, our Wild Land Biodiversity Project has focussed on the management of Trust land for the benefit of UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species. It has evolved greatly over the past three years with our Wild Land Rangers, other Trust staff and many volunteers involved in delivering a huge range of initiatives to improve the biodiversity value of our properties.

While much has been achieved, there are unfortunately few quick wins when it comes to boosting biodiversity. On some properties there have been major steps forward with, for instance, wildlife monitoring efforts starting to show encouraging results, while on others we have only just begun to scratch the surface.

Overall, results from year three have encouraged us to stick to our principles, with strong evidence that we are on the right track. Essentially, we have done what we set out to do – and done it well. We now have a good baseline of ecological information which will help us gauge future changes and the impact of management intervention on our properties.



PHOTOGRAPH: OLIVIER GOTTO

2

We have also established a robust system for ongoing ecological monitoring as well as putting systems in place to record and analyse the information gathered, with excellent potential to engage with our volunteer network through monitoring work.

One of the biggest differences being seen is through changes in grazing management on our properties, with less grazing, browsing and trampling enabling natural woodland regeneration and associated biodiversity benefits.

Of course, further work is needed far into the future to not only demonstrate that some of the more damaging impacts from previous management regimes can be reversed but that there are benefits for people as well as wildlife.

### AROUND THE PROPERTIES

Each property has different ecological priorities, but we have seen progress at all of them:

#### Water voles at Quinag

The water vole has experienced a serious decline nationally, primarily due to predation by non-native mink. Working with researchers from the University of Aberdeen on the Quinag Estate we have begun to better understand the dynamics of populations unaffected by mink which in turn provides a valuable insight into how best to direct conservation efforts in areas where mink are present. Water vole populations on the estate have persisted well in the 12 years since the study began and this year researchers were pleased to reveal the third highest recorded occupancy during that study period.

### Butterflies at Schiehallion

In 2009, the Mountain ringlet butterfly was recorded on Schiehallion for the first time in many years. This year, dedicated volunteers Carole and Alan Scott braved the weather and made three visits to the mountain in search of the butterflies, and recorded a sighting in a new location. We hope to continue with surveys and set up a transect route through areas of suitable habitat in future years.

### Seabirds at Sandwood

The health of seabird colonies in the UK has been of concern for several years, with a recent report by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee highlighting a major decline in populations of some species. A 13-year study of fulmars nesting on cliffs at Sandwood contributes to this bigger picture understanding, although the results sadly mirror the national data with colony counts falling from a mean of 693 birds in 1997 to 212 in 2010.

### Bryophytes in Skye

The Trust was lucky to have a visiting expert at Strathaird this spring. Bryologist Oliver Moore, who was undertaking his British Trust for Conservation Volunteers Natural Talent apprenticeship, spent time searching for rare liverworts and mosses – tiny plants that are important indicators of habitat health. Oliver has set up long-term monitoring plots so that we can see how our management impacts on communities of these fragile species.

### Removal of fences, Knoydart

It has been an exciting summer at Knoydart with the removal of fences to allow deer to perform their natural role as grazing herbivores in areas where long-term woodland regeneration has been successful. There are also very encouraging signs that habitat is recovering due to an overall reduction in deer numbers, with areas of birch seedlings 'getting away' from the surrounding vegetation and the woodland advancing uphill to the natural treeline.

### Tree seedlings at Nevis Estate

There are encouraging signs at Nevis that tree seedlings are starting to grow as a result of reduced deer numbers. Trust staff and volunteers mark seedlings and revisit them each summer to see how much they have grown and whether they show signs of browsing damage. At Nevis, 56 seedlings were marked in 2008 and, by 2010, had shown an average height increase of 8 cm. While this is not a statistically significant change, it is very encouraging to see that young birch and rowan seedlings are growing successfully.



### FUTURE THINKING

Our Wild Land Biodiversity Project continues to encapsulate the Trust's overall vision for the future of ecosystem management and health for wild land. As such, we remain committed to the long-term improvement of our properties and using this experience to influence change on a landscape scale.

We may only just be seeing the beginnings of positive ecological indicators at some properties, but nonetheless remain confident that our management changes are beginning to deliver the benefits we had hoped for. We are grateful to the Tubney Charitable Trust, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Peter DeHaan Charitable Trust and Scottish Natural Heritage for the financial assistance that has enabled us to kick-start this process.

Looking ahead, we have made a long-term commitment to enhancing biodiversity on our properties and incorporated key elements of the project into our Wild Land Management Standards. In addition, following a strategic review earlier in the year, the majority of the project team have now been incorporated into the permanent staff structure of the Trust.

We don't necessarily expect quick and dramatic results, but we are confident that, in time, we will hear more birdsong, the hum of dragonflies and perhaps even the rustle of undergrowth as a wildcat slips invisibly past ... ☐

### FAMILY TIES

The John Muir Award is also making a telling contribution to boosting biodiversity on Trust property and beyond. This was demonstrated in May when Durham County Council ran a series of Family Learning nature courses for fathers and children that combined exciting activities, wild places and, of course, achieving the John Muir Award.

A total of 25 families participated in four, six-week courses that ran at country parks, nature reserves and even in a school grounds. With the help of Countryside Rangers and Environmental Educators, each adult and child team worked together to meet four challenges: to discover a wild place; actively explore it; do something to conserve it; and share their experiences.

Through environmental games, activities and crafts, fathers and their children learnt about food chains, native wildlife and biodiversity. At each site, families planted trees and bulbs, constructed insect piles, participated in wildlife surveys and made bird feeders and bat boxes.

Prior to their involvement, many of the families rarely spent time outside together – with parents often marvelling at the many wild places on their doorstep that could be visited free of charge.



### About the author

Liz Auty is Biodiversity Officer at the John Muir Trust. She can be contacted at [elizabeth@jmt.org](mailto:elizabeth@jmt.org)

### Photography

- 1 Seabird monitoring at Sandwood
- 2 Water vole populations have been well studied at Quinag
- 3 *Mastigophora woodsii* – one of the many mosses found on Skye
- 4 A marked seedling at Nevis
- 5 Learning willow weaving during a course run by Durham County Council

# Wild things

PHOTOGRAPH: PETER CAIRNS



**Mike Daniels** examines the difficulty of defining just what is a true Scottish wildcat and how we can better help the cause of this wild land icon

## THE REAL IDENTITY OF THE WILDCAT IS AS ELUSIVE AS THE ANIMAL ITSELF

In many ways, as a species, the Scottish wildcat mirrors the state of wild land in the UK. At first glance, it is wild and untamed but when you search beneath its coat you realise that man's influence stretches back thousands of years, while our current activities continue to erode its wildness.

In the case of the wildcat, man's interference began with domestication. The wildcat was domesticated by the Egyptians and brought to Britain by the Romans. Here it met and bred with its native wild cousin leading to biological and scientific confusion. Darwin wrote

in 1868: "The affinity of the ordinary British cat to [the wildcat] is manifest, and due I suspect to the frequent intermixture at a time when the tame cat was first introduced into Britain ..."

Despite this, taxonomists have fought valiantly to define what makes a wildcat as opposed to a wild cat. More than any other British mammal, great emphasis has continually been put on its size, appearance and alleged difficulty in being tamed. Never mind the fact that among the millions of domestic cats in Britain there are some very big ones and many that look identical to a wildcat.





PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH RINGLAND

Never mind also that the wildcat was clearly tamed by the Egyptians and that it is possible to tame every other wild felid – even lions and tigers – to some extent.

It is as if we have a strong need for there to be a distinctive wildcat. Perhaps it is an emotional guilt or longing for the wild predators we have lost, such as the bear, wolf and lynx? There might even be a cultural need to emphasise Highland identity and fierceness; after all, wildcats feature on many clan crests and mottos plus a fair few village signs in the Scottish Highlands.

#### INCONVENIENT TRUTH

The problem is that perception and reality are not quite the same. The inconvenient truth is that the real identity of the wildcat is as elusive as the animal itself. So, after thousands of years of interbreeding, what is the Scottish wildcat today?

That was a question I and others wrestled with in the 1990s, initially under a contract for Scottish Natural Heritage, or the Nature Conservancy Council Scotland as it was then. Our research was prompted by a case in Stonehaven Sheriff Court, where the prosecution failed to prove ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ that a deceased cat, allegedly killed by a gamekeeper, was indeed a wildcat.

Five years later, having caught or collected 330 cats from across Scotland, with each one photographed and measured, their blood sampled and DNA examined; with 31 cats radio-collared and tracked day and night for a total of 150 months; and

with a doctoral thesis and ten scientific publications, our research confirmed that, even with advances in modern scientific techniques, Darwin was right. Defining a wildcat purely on the basis of its coat, its body size or even its genetics was impossible. Physically and genetically, there was effectively a ‘cline’ – a continual line of cats ranging from the domestic fireside moggy at one end of the scale to the wildcat at the other, and everything in between.

This was not to suggest, however, that wildcats did not exist. Clearly they did. We had caught, collected, collared and tracked many of them. Instead the evidence suggested an alternative approach to answering the question: where do you draw the line? Rather than worrying about a wildcat on the basis of what it looked like, we could define the wildcat on where it lived. In effect we could map areas where the ‘wildest’ cats were most likely to be found. Just like mapping wild land, mapping wildcats would allow us to focus practical conservation measures on the most important geographical areas.

#### A BATH FULL OF CATS

To understand what is in these areas and what can be done to help them, let’s use the analogy of a bath full of water to represent the wild-living cat population we have today. The bath contains mostly wild genes but with a good swirl of domestic genes mixed in over thousands of years. Additional domestic genes continually drip into the bath from one tap (through interbreeding), together with wildcat genes from the other. Cats also continually disappear down the plug through being snared or shot.

If, in our wildest wildcat areas, we could turn off the tap of domestic genes and put the plug on cats being killed, over time natural selection would return the population to its wildest state. The challenge, of course, is how to do this. Culturally we are a pet- and a cat-loving country. As individuals, we can own as many cats as we like and – sadly – also take as little responsibility for them as we like. As a result, unneutered cats roam free in large numbers across our wildcat areas, while unwanted kittens are frequently dumped.

Land management across large swathes of wildcat habitat is based on the killing of predators. Whether deliberate or accidental, cats are snared and shot by lamp at night in significant numbers, even where grouse or pheasants are not managed. The legal loophole, of course, is that wildcats are protected, but wild cats are not ... which brings us back to

the physical definition conundrum. If, instead, protection was based on an area approach, all wild living cats would be considered wildcats, and the onus would be on stopping the flow of domestic genes.

Recently, a number of projects have been launched which go some way towards adopting this approach. Both the Highland Tiger Project and the wildcat haven project run by the Scottish Wildcat Association take an area-based approach to wildcat conservation.

Similarly, both focus on responsible cat ownership but also face the culturally ingrained aversion to predators. They also of course have to wrestle with the difficulties of how to define a wildcat and how to present that definition to the public.

The Trust welcomes these projects and supports anything that raises the profile of what is surely a wild land icon. We believe that for wildcats, like our wild land, we cannot turn the clock back to a pristine time, but we can at least redress some of the damage and attempt to restore as far as possible our natural ecological processes and species. □

#### About the author

Mike Daniels is Head of Land and Science at the John Muir Trust. He can be reached at [mike.daniels@jmt.org](mailto:mike.daniels@jmt.org)

#### Further information

Highland Tiger  
[www.highlandtiger.com](http://www.highlandtiger.com)

Scottish Wildcat Association  
[www.scottishwildcats.co.uk](http://www.scottishwildcats.co.uk)

#### Photography

- 1 A Scottish wildcat on the prowl
- 2 With so many domestic cats, it is easy to see how genes can become mixed

# Rising to the wild land challenge

**Helen McDade** explains the importance of the Trust's Wild Land Campaign and outlines how Trust members can throw their weight behind it



PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN WRIGHT

1

In the spring issue of the Journal we announced the launch of a new Wild Land Campaign – an initiative that stemmed from several planning decision threats to wild land. Given that the Trust's primary job has always been to help protect wild land, it is worth examining the factors that have precipitated this very specific campaign and why we need your support.

The need for action is certainly very clear – as highlighted by recent figures from Scottish Natural Heritage. As a result of numerous small impacts such as communications masts plus several major developments, including industrial wind developments, the amount of land in Scotland remaining unaffected by any form of visual influence declined from 41% to 31% during the period 2002 to 2008.

Elsewhere, research undertaken in 2009 by the Countryside Commission for Wales found that although the total amount of land with a characteristic sense of tranquillity remained at more than 11,600km<sup>2</sup> – or 55% of the total area of Wales – over the preceding 12 years, almost 1,500km<sup>2</sup> of these special areas

had disappeared. This represents more than 6% of the total land area of Wales, or more than the entire area of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

So, this is not an 'anecdotal' problem – it is real and urgent. As such, the Trust's campaign aims to:

- Secure greater statutory protection for wild land areas throughout the UK
- Secure a new statutory designation to protect wild land in Scotland
- Raise awareness of the importance of wild land and wild places throughout the UK
- Increase understanding of the threats to these places
- Demonstrate the strength of public support through petitions and support from celebrity 'Ambassadors'
- Influence policies and decisions for the benefit of wild land, wild places and the people who use and enjoy them by encouraging politicians to take action

## SCOTTISH PICTURE

We believe there is a strong case for better statutory protection for wild land areas throughout the UK and, in the case of Scotland, a new statutory designation to ensure that wild land as an entity in itself is protected.

At the moment, just 50% of wild land in Scotland comes under any form of designation. In an ideal world, a holistic and inclusive system of planning development and sustainable land use would protect wild land without the need for the introduction of a new, formal planning designation.

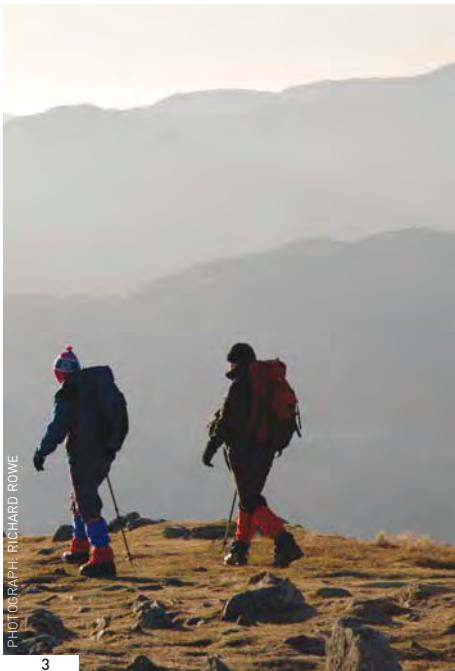
Indeed, in recent years, the Trust has worked with others to try and achieve better protection of wild land without having to resort to legislation. For example, we worked with landscape groups in the Scottish Landscape Forum to produce a report for the Scottish Executive on landscape issues and have dedicated considerable resources towards seeking to influence decision-makers.

Our concern is that neither the messages of the Scottish Landscape Forum, nor its draft Charter, have been acted upon so far by the Scottish Government. In fact, there is little indication that much weight, if any, has been given to wild land in recent planning decisions (unless it happened to be in a designated area).

In some cases, the planning processes (and ultimate recourse in the form of a Public Local Inquiry) do put a check on inappropriate developments on wild land. However, the opposition of individual planning applications that impact on wild land requires significant time, effort and resources on the part of opposing individuals or organisations, often with uncertain results even in the strongest of cases.

We just do not have the resources to intervene to protect wild land every time it is under threat and nor do other conservation organisations or individuals. We also feel strongly that developments which are obviously inappropriate should be stopped before public and private resources are expended at the planning and/or Public Inquiry stage.





PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD ROWE

3



PHOTOGRAPH: MEL NICOLL

4

### WIDER UK

The picture throughout the rest of the UK is more varied, with much of the wild land already within a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, there is still evidence of pressure from development and concern that new planning regulations will allow the fast-tracking of large developments in sensitive areas.

There are welcome moves to increase the areas of some National Parks and it is important that UK politicians see evidence of support for such proposals to ensure that happens. So, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Trust is campaigning for the extension of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or the creation of new ones as appropriate alongside better regulation of such areas.

Many of our members are in England and Wales and we want and need our members throughout the UK to be fully engaged with the campaign. There is need for policy action throughout the UK on various issues – be it in terms of designations, adequate protection of those designations, or in energy and development planning.

It is these reasons, plus the fact that England and Wales possess relatively little of the 10% wildest land (as the Trust defines it), with much of it already in protected areas, that drove our decision to have different policy ‘asks’ north and south of the Scottish border.

In England and Wales we want to work alongside others to move the agenda along, taking into account that the concept of ‘wild land’ may not necessarily resonate with politicians to quite the same extent as in Scotland. Instead, we can pursue the benefits of ‘healthy landscapes’, managing ecosystems at a landscape scale and the feeling of well-being generated by natural landscapes as more tangible

concepts for politicians and the national media.

Above all, what we are really interested in is more joined-up thinking about improved landscape and ecological protection.

However, while the Trust is interested in both landscape and ecological health as part of wild land areas, our view is that ecological protection – through Natura 2000 designations – already has a structure in place and so is much better protected than significant landscape areas. This means that while we are committed to a joined-up approach to natural heritage protection, our primary ‘environmental’ policy aim throughout this campaign is that of landscape protection.

### MEASURING SUCCESS

Our campaign aims to demonstrate the high level of support from people who share our aim of protecting wild land to ensure that the UK and devolved governments adopt an informed and sensitive approach that then drives more robust mechanisms for its protection.

Some of that change may come down to new ways of working derived from better understanding. This very much ties in with the Trust’s wider work to engage members and the public by promoting awareness, understanding and a feeling of responsibility and connection with wild places.

The bottom line, though, is that the current situation cannot continue if we wish there to be any wild land for future generations to enjoy. We must change the rules. Please help us convey the urgency of this campaign by:

- Visiting [www.jmt.org/wild-land-campaign.asp](http://www.jmt.org/wild-land-campaign.asp) for further actions and updates
- Returning the Wild Land Campaign leaflet within this article

Help us stand up for wild land. □

### OUR CHAMPIONS

The Trust is delighted that a wide range of high-profile figures have already signed up to join our campaign as Wild Land Ambassadors. All feel as strongly as we do about the need for wild land to be given greater protection.

Our Wild Land Ambassadors include Cameron McNeish, author, editor-at-large of TGO magazine and one of the best known broadcasters on Scotland’s outdoors; Simon Yates, one of the most famous and accomplished exploratory mountaineers of his time; Polly Murray, adventurer, explorer and the first Scottish woman to climb Mount Everest; and John Michie (*pictured*), television and film actor and a keen hill walker.



PHOTOGRAPH: STV

5

**I THINK IT'S OF HUGE IMPORTANCE THAT WE CONTINUE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THESE BEAUTIFUL AND UNIQUE PARTS OF OUR COUNTRY, AND DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO PROTECT AND ENJOY OUR WILD LAND**

JOHN MICHIE

#### About the author

Helen McDade is Head of Policy for the John Muir Trust. She can be contacted at [policy@jmt.org](mailto:policy@jmt.org)

#### Further information

Print versions of our Wild Land Campaign petitions can be obtained from the Pitlochry office. Please call 01796 484936

#### Photography

- 1 Cambrian views, Mid Wales
- 2 The Red Hills and Loch Slapin, viewed from the summit of Blaven
- 3 Walkers in the Lake District
- 4 One of the Trust’s new campaign posters at Inverness train station
- 5 John Michie, one of our Wild Land Ambassadors

LET YOUR LEGACY ALLOW THE WILD LAND  
AND WILD PLACES YOU LOVE TO FLOURISH,  
FOREVER.

# FOREVER WILD

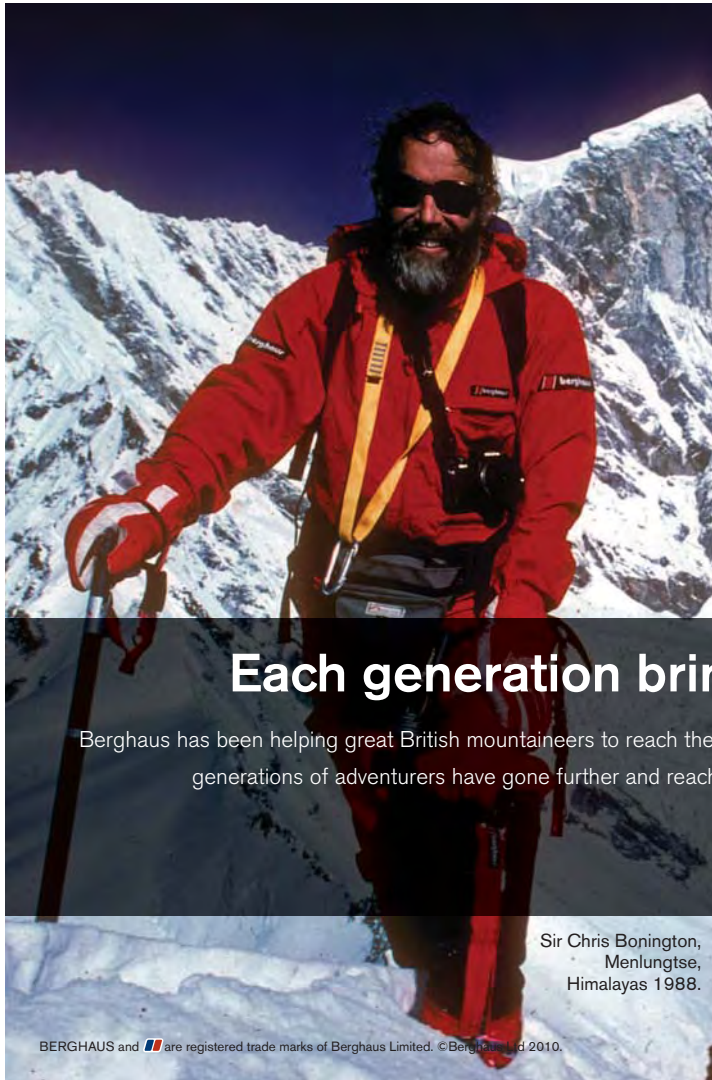
## TIME FOR REFLECTION

PLEASE CONSIDER INCLUDING A GIFT IN YOUR WILL TO THE JOHN MUIR TRUST.  
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR CONTACT SARA McCARTER FOR A LEGACY INFORMATION PACK.

[www.jmt.org/legacy](http://www.jmt.org/legacy)      [fundraising@jmt.org](mailto:fundraising@jmt.org) / 0131 554 0114

LOCHAN DUBHA IN THE HEART OF THE CUILLIN, ISLE OF SKYE, SAFEGUARDED BY THE JOHN MUIR TRUST.

PHOTOGRAPHER: KEITH BRAME



## Each generation brings a new adventure.

Berghaus has been helping great British mountaineers to reach their goals for over 40 years. From Sir Chris Bonington to Leo Houlding, generations of adventurers have gone further and reached higher, supported every step of the way by Berghaus.

Sir Chris Bonington,  
Menlungtse,  
Himalayas 1988.



[www.berghaus.com](http://www.berghaus.com)

 **berghaus**

Leo Houlding, Mount Asgard, Baffin Island, Canada 2010.  
Copyright Alastair Lee 2010.

# The uses of freedom

**Ed Douglas highlights just what we stand to lose if wild land is allowed to disappear**

The Second World War produced a small but jewel-like sub-genre of literature, which could only have been written by men incarcerated far from home in a time of conflict. I'm thinking of books about nature and the wild, produced under the most difficult circumstances by prisoners of war in an attempt to reconnect with what the authors felt was important and true while staring out from behind a barbed wire fence.

Members of the John Muir Trust will be familiar with WH Murray's classic *Mountaineering in Scotland*, but there are others like John Buxton's outstanding meditation *The Redstart*, based on notes made during an intensive study of this vivacious, showy thrush. The birds were free to migrate each winter, leaving Buxton trapped in his cage – a neat reversal of the normal state of affairs.

My favourite, however, is Felice Benuzzi's *No Picnic on Mount Kenya*, which though not as lyrical as Murray's, nor as well written as Buxton's, wins hands down in terms of bravado. Trapped inside a British prisoner-of-war camp near Nanyuki in Kenya, the Italian broke out with two companions and made an attempt to climb Mount Kenya with equipment knocked together in secret from what they could scrounge inside the camp. Then, having twice run the gauntlet of forests full of wild animals anxious to meet them, they broke back into their prison and presented themselves to the British camp commandant. They got a month in solitary for their taste of the high life.

If you want an answer about the uses of freedom, then Benuzzi's is wildly pleasing. To spend day after day hemmed in by wire and armed guards, staring up at a nearby summit, thinking about freedom, about being high in the mountains, and then taking the next step, from imagination to reality, to escape the stale air of detention for the clouds.

It puts me in mind of that champion of liberty John Stuart Mill and his clear-sighted defence of nature for nature's sake: "It is not good for man to be kept perforce at all times in the presence of his species. Solitude, in the sense of being often alone, is essential to any

depth of meditation or of character; and solitude in the presence of natural beauty and grandeur, is the cradle of thoughts and aspirations which are not only good for the individual, but which society could ill do without.

"Nor is there much satisfaction in contemplating the world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature; with every rood of land brought into cultivation, which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture ploughed up, all quadrupeds or birds which are not domesticated for man's use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture."

Mill wrote these words in 1848 and, in my darker moments, I sometimes think the world he envisaged has come to pass, with little "spontaneous act of nature" left to us. His contemporary Karl Marx warned that for all the talk and understanding of deforestation that goes on, remarkably few trees get planted. So it is with the proliferation of agencies established in the post-war period to preserve what is left of nature. Biodiversity collapses and we find our open spaces shrinking year by year.

## FACING DOWN THREATS

It is a situation mountain-lovers face across the world. This spring, I was in the Gangdise mountains of Tibet, also known as the Trans Himalaya, high on the Tibetan plateau. Sunlight here is the strongest on the planet outside of the Sahara, and a constant wind blows in the afternoon.

The Chinese are measuring up Tibet for colossal renewable energy installations. Suddenly, it seems, politicians and businessmen all over the world need more space for their plans to keep consumerism on the road.

I'm not a huge fan of Bill Murray's earlier writing – it's a little sentimental for my taste – but he was a gritty, determined and inspirational campaigner for wild places. And that is rather the point, to

**PEOPLE NEED  
BLANK SPACES  
WHERE THEY CAN  
FEEL THEMSELVES  
FULLY REALISED**

have a public space where you can be whoever you imagine yourself to be. That's what we're losing now, and at great speed.

The threats Murray faced down weren't wind farms or transmission lines, but conifers and hydro schemes, yet he was under no illusion about what the future held: "There is never a lack of developers and their plans. But if you want to keep the best of your landscape, you'll have to fight for it: if you don't, no one else will."

Environmental proponents of large-scale industrial complexes in Britain's wild places have, they believe, a strong moral argument on their side that, without the turbines and pylons, nature will suffer more. It's a discomforting experience to be harangued by environmentalists as selfish. It takes a steady nerve and some clear thinking to answer that charge. It was something Murray encountered, and while his opponents seem more obviously self-interested than ours, it seems likely to me that not all wild farm developers cashing in on fat public subsidies to despoil landscapes aren't altogether motivated by a concern for the world's future.

"I heard 'selfish' applied," Murray wrote, "to all who opposed afforestation with sitkas of places like Rannoch Moor, or the Trossachs, or the flow country of



PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

Caithness, or wherever, on the grounds that they denied a crop and jobs to the people. They denied no such thing, but the same easy sophistry became the plea of every developer no matter what.”

Time and again we discover that the important national need that demanded somewhere beautiful be destroyed turns out to have been the important need of a few individuals who make a lot of money for themselves, but impoverish the potential of an area forever. Fighting for wild lands to be designated isn’t a question of turning our backs on economic need – in fact, quite the reverse.

Murray understood the value of designation, and argued that until Scotland’s wild places were given statutory protection as national parks they would be under threat from developers. I think he would have shared Mill’s view that people need blank spaces where they can feel

themselves fully realised. Unlike Benuzzi or Buxton, Murray stayed in his prison cell and conjured up the wild in his imagination.

What would it be like to live in the world Mill imagined, one given over completely to development, where every square yard served a defined purpose? Much, I imagine, like living in a prison that wasn’t worth breaking out of, and where the inmates had forgotten what freedom looks like. □



**About the author**

Ed Douglas is a traveller and writer of mountain literature. A former editor of the *Alpine Journal*, Ed is also an enthusiastic amateur climber, with winter ascents in the Alps and Himalayas.

**Photography**

1 Looking towards the Isle of Mull from Ben Cruachan



PHOTOGRAPHY: JEN MILLER

# Reef restoration

1

Recipient of the 2010 Bill Wallace Grant, **Jen Miller** recounts her experience of working in Borneo to help improve understanding of the threats facing some of the world's most celebrated coral reefs

Scientists today predict environmental crises that, in some cases, are global in scale and which could leave tomorrow's children without the precious land and seascapes that I, for one, was lucky enough to experience. Such threats demand our attention and are the reason why I wanted to use my own background to assist with pioneering work on coral reef conservation in Borneo.

It is a subject dear to my heart. Having studied Zoology at Newcastle University, followed by a research assistantship that included a project on coral disease, I was keen to expand my work in the field.

Coral reefs are the rainforests of the sea, providing half a billion people with shoreline protection, food and income. Without healthy corals, our vibrant tropical reefs would quickly change into eerie expanses bereft of the biodiversity for which they are famed. Scientific research is desperately needed to help conserve and protect an ecosystem that faces many challenges over the next 100 years.

## BORNEO BOUND

The Asian coral triangle - an area of high reef biodiversity that includes the reefs of Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines - is famed for its underwater rainbow cities full of man-sized fish, floppy anemones and playful turtles. Sadly, biodiversity hotspots such as the Sabah reefs in Malaysian Borneo are threatened by coral diseases, a problem that often goes unseen by Marine Parks and authorities.



2

**CORAL REEFS ARE  
THE RAINFORESTS  
OF THE SEA**



Aware of the lack of research into coral disease, I contacted the Marine Conservation Society's Coral Reef Conservation Officer, Dr Liz Wood. Liz manages the Semporna Islands Darwin Project, which has helped create the most recent and largest marine reserve in Sabah – the Tun Sakaran Marine Park. Together with Sabah Parks co-ordinator, Helen Brunt, Nasrul Maidin, the Marine Research Officer, and many other local staff, we developed what was the first project of its kind to study the diseases currently threatening the reefs at three Marine Parks.

Each Marine Park proved very different. Rolling into the boat-churned waters of Tunku Abdul Rahman Park – a cluster of islands just a 20-minute speedboat ride from the city of Kota Kinabalu – the depths clouded before me as I squinted to see our transect line. I could see vast tables of finger-like coral that seemed to sigh under the strain of White Syndrome, a disease that has taken a steady grip on parts of the reef.

Some areas were stunningly unspoilt, with rich coral gardens of diverse, century-old forms. Here, splendid lionfish floated gracefully above giant sponges, while nervous puffer fish poked their inflated noses out from secret shelters. Elsewhere, resting octopus nestled in coral beds and territorial moray eels watched us curiously as shy turtles drifted away into the distance.

Sadly, others yielded shocking patches of bare rubble with scattered coral remains showing the scars of catastrophic blast fishing. Elsewhere, there was evidence of abandoned fishing nets that pose a danger to turtles and other species before eventually rotting into the reef.

After a day or two exploring, nibbling fresh mangos and stocking up on Nasi Lemak (a spicy squid and egg breakfast), we sped out to Pulau Boheydulang in the new Tun Sakaran Marine Park. There, we found some evidence of disease and snowy caps of sun-bleached coral, but overall the reefs were thriving.

On occasion, our surveys were interrupted by local fishermen who had come to scour the reefs for groupers, rabbitfish, jacks and wrasse. Our Sabah Parks boat would pass them slowly, checking for signs of destructive fishing methods before speeding off to our next survey.

Interacting with local residents is an integral part of the Marine Park's success, as co-operation proves far more constructive than restriction and excessive authority. Sabah Parks and the Semporna Islands Project staff have also worked on developing alternative livelihood schemes, including Abalone mollusc and sea cucumber farming projects, as well as providing regular workshops where people can learn more about the amazing creatures that live on their doorsteps.

#### PARADISE FOUND

The final park surveyed was the world-famous Sipadan Island Park, an area that first gained protection in 1933 thanks to its particularly spectacular, and often unique, marine life.

A bottom-bruising boat ride over tempestuous waves brought us to this tiny piece of paradise in the Celebes Sea. A fuchsia sunset welcomed us to the island, while giant coconut crabs scurried under monster leaves as we heaved our diving gear onto our temporary home. After setting up the diving air-compressor under the shade of towering papaya trees and a brief snooze, I prepared myself for a world-renowned diving experience.

Just before 6am, our survey team plunged into the clear warm waters of South Point reef and were immediately greeted by sleepy bumphead parrotfish, gracefully weaving between us in one great school. Elsewhere, cleaner fish darted nonchalantly through the open jaws of sharks on the seabed, while hungry trigger fish chased their breakfast through the sea fans. Glancing at a cloudlike swirl in the distance, we recognised a whispering school of barracuda circling above.

When we finally snapped back to reality and got to work pulling transect lines past scuttling mantis shrimp, there was not a single disease in sight. There were a few patches of sun-bleached tissue, but never have I seen such a healthy reef. At times diving here felt more like diving in fish rather than water, until every now and again a green turtle would scatter the shoals as it headed to the surface.

Later, I was lucky enough to witness the beginning of these charismatic animals' lives at the island's turtle hatchery. It all starts with a midnight expedition when staff collect newly-laid eggs and carefully measure the brooding females as they lie exhausted in the sand. At dusk, many months later, day-old turtles tumble purposefully over the golden beach as they head for the warm sea and the start of their own, hopefully, long lives.

My research highlighted the necessity of protecting these fascinating environments, but also alerted me to the worrying links between coral health and the many man-made pressures placed upon them. Together, Sabah Parks and the Semporna Islands Darwin Project are working as part of a multi-national force that is taking important steps towards achieving sustainability for these crucial ecosystems.

There are countless hurdles to overcome and many a mind to change, but so long as there are turtles to dive with and coral to dazzle us, I think we will have the motivation to keep these wild places as spectacular as they can be. □



3



4

#### About the author

Jen Miller spent six weeks in Borneo. The trip was part-funded by the Bill Wallace 'Go and Do It' Grant, a scheme launched three years ago in memory of a true Trust stalwart. The grant is awarded for an expedition to wild places that is adventurous and of educational or scientific significance.

The closing date for grant applications is 15 January each year, with application forms available for download at [www.jmt.org/assets/pdf/go-and-do-it-form\\_07.pdf](http://www.jmt.org/assets/pdf/go-and-do-it-form_07.pdf)

For more details, contact [development@jmt.org](mailto:development@jmt.org)

#### Photography

- 1 A school of barracuda
- 2 Jen at work
- 3 Relaxing out of the water with reserve staff
- 4 Resurfacing following an early dive



PHOTOGRAPH: DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

1

## Wild writing competition 2010

**Melissa Harrison** won the 2010 Wild Journeys, Wild Places writing competition with her short story *Dimmity* - the tale of a journey at dusk to a familiar stretch of moorland. Here is the story in full

HE LIVED IN THE  
VILLAGE, BUT THE  
MOOR WAS FAMILIAR  
TO HIM BEYOND  
KNOWING

He left the village as the rooks began gathering in the sycamores near the church, taking the ancient sunken lane that ran past the dairy farm and up onto the moor. It was sunk deep below the fields on either side, hedged with blackthorn and fringed below with brambles and late foxgloves and the glossy green straps of harts-tongue fern.

Few cars passed him, and his departure from the village went more or less unremarked. Near Burrent Farm a jeep rattled past, two dogs baying at him from the front seat and pheasants swaying on racks in the back, but he pressed himself deep into the hedge and the driver didn't even look at him. Other than that, the lanes were quiet.

Soon he passed through a gate into a lush field fragrant with dung, the little owl-haunted wood at its edge gathering the coming dusk to it like something precious and brief. The lights of the village were winking on behind him as he crested the rise, and then the darkening moor was all before him, silent and immense.

He lived in the village, but the moor was familiar to him beyond knowing. When he was young his mother had taken him and his sisters up there time and again, until its very smell was part of his blood. There it was now: peat and horse manure and clear water on stone. He closed his eyes briefly and wondered, as he always did, where she was now and why she had driven him away.

Even now, all this time later, the moor brought him comfort. He loved the way the rough granite pushed through the thin skin of turf, and the way fires revealed the tortuous architecture of the gorse bushes like bleak white bones. He knew where the ponies sheltered in a north-easterly, behind tors or in the lee of the few, twisted thorns, and most importantly which parts of the moor went more or less unvisited by people, and were thus still truly wild.

The sky above him was a theatre of stars, and underfoot the close, moorland grass was studded here and there with the tiny yellow flowers of tormentil. A sheep path led up through the bracken towards the black tor brooding on the horizon.

He smelled the man before he saw him, a dark shape almost part of the darker rocks behind. An ember glowed orange and described a brief arc, and the reek of tobacco drifted towards him on the night air. Why would someone be at the tor at this time – this tor in particular, so remote and in a corner of the moor that he had long considered his own? He bristled, but remained motionless, wondering if his passage up the slope had been observed. But in a moment the spark arced into the heather and the man's shape disappeared behind the tor, his progress down the further slope audible for many minutes after his figure was lost to view.

In the gathering dusk the summit of the tor felt like the top of the world. The high wind blustered and was quiet, ravaging distantly as it swept on to buffet tor after distant tor. Settling down between the sheltering rocks all he could see of the human world was a distant line of winking traffic, an unguessable distance away. Beyond that, invisible now but always present, was the age-old rumour of the sea.

Faint calls filtered down and the stars above were briefly extinguished as flight after flight of migrating redwings passed high overhead, calling to one another as they flew. They had come to escape the bitter Scandinavian winter, and would be gone before the bog cottongrass flowered next year.

One of the huge granite blocks that made up the summit of the tor bore two basins, immeasurably old and perfectly circular. Each held black water, the still surface of the smaller pool reflecting Sirius where he hunted the sky to the south. But now he saw that in the larger basin floated flowers, their creamy petals fresh and perfect, their perfume intense in the night air. He leaned over, put his nose to one and drank in the smell, so beautiful and so out of place. The man must have left them there – but why? Yet the moor threw up countless mysteries, and there was no way for him to know. He tucked himself down behind the stack, out of the wind, and closed his eyes.

The slopes of the tor were alive with movement. He could hear sheep

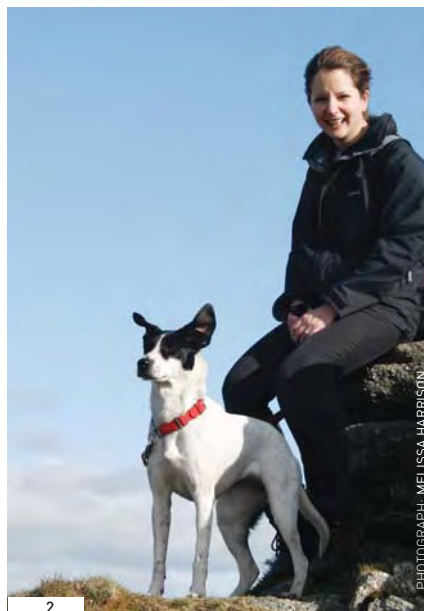
cropping the dew-damp turf somewhere not far away, and owls were calling from the distant spinneys. Soon the rabbits would all be underground again for the night, but for now there were still a few about, their white scuts bobbing among the bracken. A brief scream raised his hackles: one had been taken, probably by a stoat. He imagined its brethren writhing and yikking jealously around it as the blood-smell filled their nostrils.

It was time. He stepped lightly down the granite clutter on the far face of the tor, careful to walk always into the wind.

At the foot of the slope was a little wood of ancient, twisted oaks, their branches hung with lichen and decked with ferns, the rocks beneath them green with moss. The warren there was a fastness, but it was one he had breached before.

He melted into the shadows at the foot of a dry-stone wall and crouched, ears forward, brush twitching almost imperceptibly. When he sprang it was to take a doe as she emerged from her burrow, hitting her in a brutal thud of fur on fur. He killed her silently with a bite to the back of the neck and trotted on, his catch hanging limp and warm from his mouth. Last night he had eaten only blackberries and dung beetles and a litter of baby rats, but tonight was a good night.

The dog fox took the line of the old wall down and off the moor. As he reached the road the last light finally faded from the west, and the old moors offered themselves up to the darkening sky like the host. □



## THIS YEAR'S WINNERS

The Trust's wild writing competition aims to encourage new and aspiring writers to share their experiences and stories of wild places. The 2010 competition was judged by author and folklorist Margaret Bennett. Here is the full list of winners:

### ADULT CATEGORY

1st place

*Dimmity*, by Melissa Harrison

2nd place

*Leap of Fate*, by Michelle Frost

3rd place

*Misinformed*, by Martin McKendry

### POETRY COMPETITION WINNER

*Michaelmas*, by Iain Dubh

### GAELIC CATEGORY WINNER

*Fada air Chùil*, by Neil McRae

### JUNIOR CATEGORY

*Mountain*, by Grant MacCallum, Invergarry Primary School

### About the author

Melissa Harrison is a writer, freelance photographer and sub-editor. The youngest child of six, she grew up in Surrey but spent most of her childhood summers on Dartmoor where she developed a deep love of wild places. Melissa now lives in South London with her husband, Anthony, and rescue dog, Scout, and escapes to go hiking and camping as often as possible. She is currently working on a novel set in the lost, wild corners of a city called Clay.

### Photography

1 Sunset on Dartmoor

2 Melissa and Scout

# Wilder Britain, wilder us

Heralded as Britain's most ambitious photography-based conservation initiative ever, 2020VISION is now underway and coming to an area near you soon

There's no point speaking softly if you want to make a difference. That's the belief of those behind 2020VISION, a wonderfully ambitious multi-media project that has set itself the task of creating a blueprint for a wilder, healthier Britain – one that we can all share in and enjoy.

One of the project's primary aims is to reconnect wild places with each other and us with wild places, demonstrating the value in restoring Britain's battered and bruised ecosystems. The thinking is simple enough: we all rely on the services that nature provides – from clean air to fresh water and productive soils – so it makes sense for us all to help restore and maintain these natural processes.

"We want to show how a revitalised British landscape, one where ecosystems function as they should, are of real benefit not only to the wildlife that lives there, but also to us," explains Peter Cairns, Project Coordinator.

The project sees 20 of the country's top wildlife and nature photographers come together for the first time with a range of leading conservation partners, including the John Muir Trust. With the help of other specialists such as aerial videographers, sound recordists and even musicians the photo-team will gather thousands of photos and video-clips that will combine to tell the story of Britain's ecosystems and how people are coming together to restore our landscapes.

Starting in October 2010, the photo-team will spend 20 months carrying out 20 flagship assignments that will demonstrate the link between a healthy natural landscape and the well-being of local people. During this time, the photographers will not just be taking pictures but will also work alongside local conservation groups, community schools and others.

Most exciting of all for those lucky enough to be chosen, 2020VISION has teamed with the John Muir Award to

select and then mentor 20 young image makers from across Britain as part of its Young Champions scheme. Those chosen will join photo-teams on location and then return to their communities to inspire other young people with their experiences and images.

But their responsibilities will not end there. Each Young Champion will also be involved in media interviews and act as ambassadors for the project, making presentations, giving talks and spreading the word.

## PEOPLE POWER

Given that the project involves such a collaborative process, it is little wonder that those behind 2020VISION say it is less about photography and more about communication – and people.

"By working together we can produce something much more effective than would ever be possible by working in isolation," says Cairns. "It's about conveying the simple but irrefutable link between healthy ecosystems and healthy people."

By design, the project also calls for a much more rounded approach to nature conservation – something that for decades has focussed more on individual species and specific fragments of habitat. Instead the call now is for us all to think big, to reconnect and restore whole ecosystems on a landscape scale.

Of course, such restoration processes can be painfully slow – often measured in decades or even centuries – which can make it hard to convey the importance of such work. This is one reason why the project aims to communicate with people in a more relevant and accessible language, one that bypasses conservation jargon and uses stimulating visual imagery to make ecosystems exciting.

Crucially, the project will not just preach to the converted; it will reach out to the masses through major outdoor exhibitions in city squares and shopping centres, as well as staging outdoor shows and musical events. "We want

2020VISION to provide a bridge between conservation science and a wider mainstream audience," explains Cairns. "We want everyone to see it and be moved by its message."

And with the resources created being made available for conservation organisation partners and those best placed to use them, it should allow the John Muir Trust and others to better communicate their own messages.

"A decade from now [in 2020], a new generation of decision-makers will face the legacy of things we do today," notes Cairns. "Within a decade we need to have a new outlook on nature. So, this is a vision for 2020 – a call for action to restore Britain's battered ecosystems over the next decade." □

WE WANT TO  
PROVIDE A  
BRIDGE BETWEEN  
CONSERVATION  
SCIENCE AND A  
WIDER MAINSTREAM  
AUDIENCE



PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID NOTON/2020VISION

1



PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX MUSTARD/2020VISION

2



PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID TIPLING/2020VISION

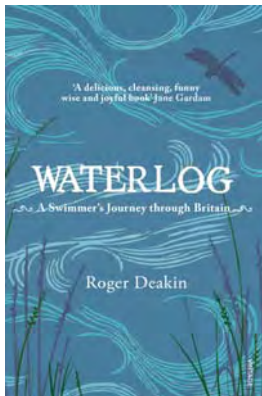
3

#### Further information

For much more on this amazing project, from following photographers on assignment to making your own ecosystem pledges, visit [www.2020v.org](http://www.2020v.org)

#### Photography

- 1 Porthcurno, Cornwall at sunrise
- 2 Grey seal underwater, Northumberland
- 3 Barn owl at sunset, Norfolk



## Waterlog, A Swimmer's Journey through Britain, Roger Deakin

**Richard Rowe introduces a relatively recent title that has already become a modern classic of nature writing – although Roger Deakin's *Waterlog* is much more than that**

Apparently, apart from the proboscis monkey of Borneo, we are the only primate that regularly takes to the water for the sheer joy of it. So explains Roger Deakin, author of *Waterlog*: a gentle, often funny and passionate travelogue that celebrates the elemental joy of swimming outdoors, enveloped by nature.

Deakin, who died in 2006, was a highly-respected writer, environmentalist and filmmaker who lived in Suffolk in a wooden house built by his own hand from the ruins of an Elizabethan steading. He was a guiding light and close friend of Robert Macfarlane who often referenced the much older man in his own dazzling book, *The Wild Places*. "There could have been no one better with whom to discuss wildness than Roger," Macfarlane noted while planning his own terrestrial journey across Britain.

Deakin's ancient home, which creaked and groaned as if alive, was protected by a moat – itself a living, breathing entity, fed by an underwater spring, in which he would take regular dips.

Appropriately enough, *Waterlog* begins with the author taking shelter in the moat during a summer storm: "Breast-stroking up and down the thirty yards of clear, green water, I nosed along, eyes

just at water level. The frog's-eye view of rain on the moat was magnificent ... each raindrop exploded in a momentary, bouncing fountain that turned into a bubble and burst."

And it was during this drenching that he first dreamt up the idea of a long swim through the waterways of Britain. "I wanted to follow the rain on its meanderings about our land to rejoining the sea, to break out of the frustration of a lifetime doing lengths, of endlessly turning back on myself like a tiger pacing its cage," he writes.

His inspiration came from *The Swimmer*, a classic short story by the American writer John Cheever in which the lead character, Ned Merrill, decides to swim home from a party via the swimming pools of his Long Island neighbours. Those who have seen the subsequent film starring Burt Lancaster will remember how with each stop on the way home an increasingly dispirited Merrill encounters people and incidents from his past that gradually strip away the layers of his cosy existence.

Deakin's journey is much more upbeat – one that celebrates his love of the water and the way it has shaped so much of the British landscape. "The more I thought about it, the more obsessed I became with the idea of a swimming journey. I grew convinced that following water, flowing with it, would be a way of getting under the skin of things, of learning something new."

He pledged to begin and end the journey in his own moat, setting out in spring and swimming throughout the year, travelling through rivers, lakes, lochs, streams and seas from the Scilly Isles to the Gulf of Corryvreckan and its infamous whirlpool.

Along the way, he experiences countless waterways each with their own distinct character. Take one river in Norfolk: "I heard the brimming river before I saw it, pouring and dancing more like mountain water beside a grassy path that bordered a marshy wood. This was the Wissey, a river so secret that even its name sounds like a whisper; a river of intoxicating beauty that appears somehow to have avoided the late twentieth century altogether and to know nothing of drought or over-abstraction, let alone pollution."

He experiences a similar strength of feeling when encountering more challenging stretches of water, from the underground meanderings of Yorkshire's Hell Gill to the special menace of the Corryvreckan whirlpool,



just off the island of Jura. "What no navigation guide could communicate is the deeply unsettling atmosphere of the place, the intense physical presence of the whirlpool and the scale of the turbulence."

Like the tides he often battles when sea swimming, the pages ebb and flow with the humour, vigour and sheer independent spirit of a man who had immersed himself in nature from an early age.

But *Waterlog* is also about us and our attitudes to the water – and the wild. For some, the idea of slipping beneath the cool, dark waters of a secret waterway is something to fear, while for others such 'wild' swimming is the purest form of getting your feet wet.

Those who revel in such outdoor pleasures will certainly appreciate the author's own wonderfully haphazard approach to a life aquatic, summed up while exploring the Rhinog Mountains of Wales. "My only purpose was to get thoroughly lost; to disappear into the hills and tarns and miss my way home for as long as possible. If I could find a string of swims and dips, each one surpassing the last in aimlessness, so much the better."

Getting lost in such a blissful way is something we should perhaps all try from time to time. □

### Book details

*Waterlog, A Swimmer's Journey through Britain* is published by Vintage Books, part of the Random House Group. [www.vintage-books.co.uk](http://www.vintage-books.co.uk)

### The reviewer

Richard Rowe is editor of the John Muir Trust Journal. He can be contacted at [journal@jmt.org](mailto:journal@jmt.org)



**The Weekend Fix, by Craig Weldon**  
Reviewed by Caroline Standing

“It was a long wet slog and, on the summit ridge, a wet, battered crawl thanks to the wind and stinging, ferocious rain ... what was I doing wasting my time climbing some random hill, miles from anywhere, in appalling weather?” There may be many of you that have asked yourself this same question. But how many of you also have a favourite OS map, have slept in freezing car parks to be closer to the hill or driven with your head sticking out of the window because the windscreen had frozen over in the remote parts of Scotland? Someone who has done all of these and more is Craig Weldon, with this book providing an entertaining account of his life told through various adventures in the hills.

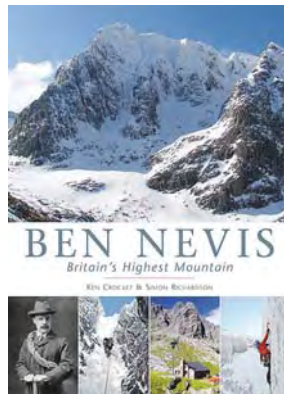
Well-written and full of humour, the book is separated into different periods in the author's life from university days to his mid-thirties, with each chapter split into one to two pages per walk. Although a book to be enjoyed by anyone, it is probably best appreciated by those who share the author's love of hill walking, particularly those who understand the feeling of escape that comes from leaving it all behind – if only for a weekend 'fix'.

Sandstone Press, 2009, £11.99  
ISBN: 978-1-905207-26-8

**Ben Nevis - Britain's Highest Mountain, by Ken Crockett & Simon Richardson**

Reviewed by Sandy Maxwell

At its heart this is a climbing enthusiast's history of the people who have been fascinated with ascending Britain's highest mountain. In a new edition of Ken Crockett's definitive book on Ben Nevis from 1986 he is joined by another climber, Simon Richardson, who has also contributed much to the recent history of the Ben.



From the first mention of “Bin Nevesh” included in a 1586 map by Timothy Pont to the 2008 summer climbing season the interaction of humans with the mountain is lovingly explored with great detail and illustrated with a fantastic selection of photos.

The background to the characters that have climbed the Ben is told with interesting and amusing detail. The book is structured as an era by era look with successive chapters plotting the change in styles and tracing trends of successive waves of people exploring and conquering the slopes.

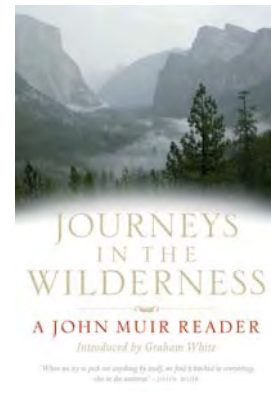
As we approach the eighties the pace quickens and as chapters cover shorter periods in greater depth, so the technical side of equipment and routes takes over from the general interest stories. Interspersed with the climbs are fascinating chapters chronicling the history of many aspects of the Ben, including the pioneering meteorologists in the observatory, the competition of the Ben race and the attraction of Ben Nevis whisky.

Modern issues of managing the phenomenon of thousands of people climbing the pony track as part of charity events are touched upon. During the early parts of the book a balanced viewpoint of the hill is maintained but focus for the more recent past is seen largely from the Allt á Mhuilinn and the North Face.

The range and depth of material in this work means it could have produced two books so this is great value for those interested both in climbing and the story of this iconic mountain. Appendices cover aspects of geology, mapping and wildlife to give a complete view of Ben Nevis and an attempt to explain the place it holds in many people's hearts.

Scottish Mountaineering Trust Publications, 2nd edition 2009. Hardback £27.50

ISBN: 978-1-907233-10-4



**Journeys in the Wilderness: a John Muir Reader, introduced by Graham White**

Reviewed by Denis Mollinson

The writings of John Muir changed the world, turning conservation from a philosophy into a practical movement around the globe. Muir's uniqueness lay in combining a passionate love of nature with scientific objectivity in studying it, and the eloquence to express both.

He was also a remarkable traveller, setting off for weeks in the wild with little more than an old tweed jacket for warmth and shelter and dried bread for food, yet achieving solo ascents of quite challenging mountains. He was not at home in “city canyons”, but his eloquence brought President Theodore Roosevelt to three days of one-to-one discussions in the wilds of Yosemite in 1903, with huge consequences for the expansion and preservationist focus of National Parks.

This selection is introduced by Graham White, one of those who has done most to rescue Muir from his state 30 years ago of a prophet unknown in his own country. And this isn't just a parochial Scottish interest, because you cannot understand Muir without seeing how he was grounded in his childhood in 1840s Dunbar.

His main travels in California and Alaska are well-covered in this book. Perhaps the one significant omission – and a gap in his own writings, apart from journal entries and letters – is his stay in Canada in 1864-6, and the ‘1000-mile walk to the Gulf’ the following year. It was a period that arguably completed the development of his outlook on life.

The availability of such a convenient paperback full of much of Muir's most inspirational and prophetic writing means there really is no excuse not to remember him in his own country.

Birlinn 2009, £12.99

ISBN: 978-1-841586-97-7

# A modest form of rebellion

Wildness is the twist of roe deer hair caught in a barbed wire fence; the sound of geese flying high over a sleeping orange city; mares tails thrusting defiantly through tarmac. It is the outward expression of the Earth's vitality and a perpetual source of hope we erode at our peril, writes **Niall Benvie**

Wildness matters to me. Perhaps it is even the most important thing in my life since it helps to make sense of everything else: in wildness is the preservation of sanity, where I can take comfort in my insignificance; where, in truth, we all can. Wildness is like a good friend, telling us things about ourselves that brothers or sisters may hesitate to. It makes us stronger. Of course we can live without friends – and wildness – but we are much the poorer for doing so.

Wildness occupies the crumple zone between wilderness and culture, where natural process and hubris collide to throw up mountains of conflict. Most of us are generals looking the wrong way, thinking we have suppressed the enemy – wild nature – while failing to see it regroup behind us. Wildness is the envoy reminding us that we are ranged against a force far more potent – and indifferent to our fate – than we can imagine. But its voice is quiet compared to the din of our self-congratulation.

The whole process of consuming wilderness (the purest expression of wildness) and trying to suppress wildness is ultimately a self-destructive one. Wild land has always allowed us clean water, fresh air, food, wood and fibre. Too often, though, we have helped ourselves without gratitude, taking natural generosity for granted. The time to cultivate good manners in our relationship with the land, not least so that we can continue to enjoy these gifts so freely given, is rapidly running out. When the time comes, the generals will no longer be able to avert their gaze.

My own experience of wild land is often mediated by a camera but in the translation of encounter into visual image, a great deal is lost: it is the other senses that give an experience its depth of flavour. However compromised the representation of wildness, it is still worth hurling each image at the ranks of complacent generals, alerting them to the primacy of natural process and the need to find an accommodation with it – for our own sake.

This is my modest rebellion against a culture that sanctions the looting of the store of natural capital with no intention of repaying the debt. I stand alongside the stubborn mares tails and incredulous roe deer.

I value wildness ahead of wilderness for the simple reason that the notion of wildness offers some prospect of reconciliation between nature and culture; the concept of wilderness necessarily excludes people from the landscape. I want to be present in that landscape and want to see others take a living from the land without robbing it.

Moreover, as Paul Sheppard writes in his 1992 essay, *A Post-Historic Primitivism*: “The corporate world would destroy wildness in a trade for wilderness. Its intent is to restrict the play of free and selfish genes, to establish a dichotomy of places, to banish wild forms to places where they may be encountered by audiences while the business of domesticating the planet proceeds.”

Wildness must be part of our everyday experience, not something reserved for a few in faraway places. We all deserve daily access to hope. □

## About the author

Niall Benvie has worked as a professional outdoor photographer and writer since graduating from Dundee University in 1993, following an earlier career as a fruit farmer. His special interest is in the nature/culture dynamic, with a particular passion for using photography as a means of introducing people to the wonders of the natural world. Among his many initiatives, he is the founding director of Wild Wonders of Europe and a founding fellow of the International League of Conservation Photographers. He is also on the team of 2020VISION (see page 26). His most recent book, *Outdoor Photography Masterclass*, was published in 2010.

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







# VISIT

THE WORLD'S  
LARGEST  
SCOTCH WHISKY  
COLLECTION  
AT THE

The Scotch Whisky  
Experience

WWW.SCOTCHWHISKYEXPERIENCE.CO.UK • NEXT TO EDINBURGH CASTLE



Stuchd an Lochain, Perthshire

[www.eagleskiclub.org.uk](http://www.eagleskiclub.org.uk)

Membership Secretary,  
Eagle Ski Club,  
5 Fitzgerald Road,  
London SW14 8HA

...the UK's largest and most active ski touring and ski mountaineering club, organises a varied programme of ski tours and training courses every year. Year-round outdoor and social activities in the UK. We welcome both alpine and free-heel Skiers.

# teko<sup>®</sup> for nepal

At teko<sup>®</sup> we take our environmental responsibilities seriously. We want all outdoor communities to enjoy our organic merino wool, organic cotton or 100% recycled Polyester socks.

The teko<sup>®</sup> for Nepal programme ensures that demonstration socks used in shops are sent to Sherpas and porters in Nepal. Now while they're working in the harsh terrain of the Himalayas, their feet stay protected.



best socks on the planet.  
best socks for the planet.™

For further info on teko<sup>®</sup> socks please call 0131 317 0200



## Warm on the inside

(and it's not just the flask we're talking about)

At Tiso we know you'll need the right gear whether you're ice climbing on Ben Nevis or going for a stroll on Sandwood Bay. That's why we're geared up for you. Because we like to test the gear that we sell in the only way we know. Out there. We know what it's like to bag your first Munro and we've fallen in more streams than you could imagine. So when you leave the store you'll have the best advice and the right gear.



Geared up for you  
[tiso.com](http://tiso.com)



Visit your nearest Tiso store or shop online at [tiso.com](http://tiso.com).

# Li and Coire Dhorrcail, Knoydart

In the first of a series of personal accounts from Trust properties, **Lester Standen** reflects on a busy year in Knoydart

I listened to the forecast before I went to bed on a dark winter night; northerly gales bringing blizzard conditions to the Highlands the following day. I'd get up earlier than usual then to reach Knoydart before it really set in.

'Don't travel unless your journey is absolutely necessary' was the advice on the radio when I woke. Snow was already falling as I drove, slithering through the dark. Under the grey light of dawn, I spent 10 minutes in a boat crossing Loch Hourn – the most fjord-like of all our sea lochs. Access here is by boat except for the serious walker.

Later, trudging up a frozen burn through a gorge, I broke through the ice up to my thighs a couple of times. It didn't bother me the second time. The work at this time of year is the deer cull; someone's got to do it.

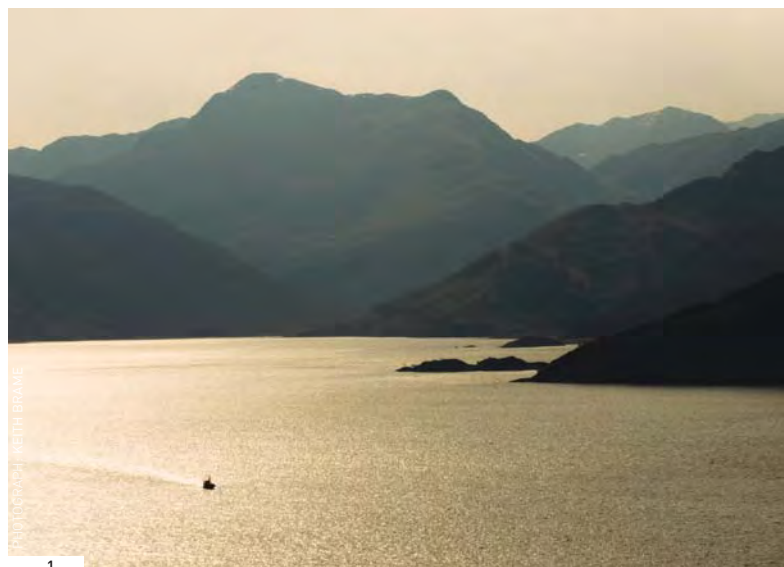
The John Muir Trust started a native woodland regeneration and expansion project here 20 years ago. Already the area has a very natural feel to it. The woodland provides shelter each time I come. Pine, birch and oak now tower above and I always want to linger, savouring the scent of the pines, listening to the wind, watching for wildlife, never quite knowing what I'll see: perhaps a raven, an eagle or a pine marten?

In May, the shrill call of the grasshopper warbler filled the air as volunteers came to take down some redundant fencing. It was erected in 1990 to protect regenerating and planted trees from browsing by deer. With no deer in these woodlands for so long, the heather and other dwarf shrubs have smothered the ground and prevented any further regeneration.

The evening we arrived, I went for a walk up the hillside above the Allt Dhorrcail gorge. In the still, warm air I stood looking down at the gnarled old pines and Loch Hourn. Mountain ridges reflected from the dark surface of the water, accentuating the depths of the loch. As I wandered down I heard a rustling and, looking around, realised I was being overtaken by a badger, and then another. I stopped to watch as they leapt at each other; growling and snarling they rolled over, back and forth for about a minute, neither gaining the upper hand. They took off as suddenly as they had appeared as if running for their lives, one behind the other.

Down at the tents I caught up with the others cooking their supper. Dave Bone had gone off to carry down some rolls of fencing wire; a keen volunteer there was no holding him back. Dave has travelled up from Manchester at least a couple of times every year for the best part of two decades. Having driven all that way he wasn't going to sit around doing nothing!

By contrast, one of the others volunteers was new to it; he had never 'wild camped' before as he put it, but gave it a try and loved it. They all do. □



#### About the author

Lester Standen is Deer Officer for the John Muir Trust. He can be contacted at [lester@jmt.org](mailto:lester@jmt.org)

#### Photography

1 A small boat makes its way across Loch Hourn

Loch Hourn from  
Coire Dhorrcail, Knoydart

PROPERTIES



PHOTOGRAPH BY KETH BRAME

# Dram, fine, splendid

*...need we say more!*



BEN NEVIS DISTILLERY (FORT WILLIAM)LTD,  
Lochy Bridge, Fort William, PH33 6TJ  
Tel: 01397 702476 • Fax: 01397 702768  
E-mail: [colin@bennevisdistillery.com](mailto:colin@bennevisdistillery.com)

[www.bennevisdistillery.com](http://www.bennevisdistillery.com)