



## **Report on 2014 Conservation volunteering in the John Muir Trust**

Members and non-members can join our conservation work parties. They take place on John Muir Trust properties and on our partnership properties. Participants arrange their own food, travel and accommodation.

These events are designed to enable our members and others to:

- contribute to the practical work of the John Muir Trust on Trust and partnership properties
- learn about the John Muir Trust and partnership properties and how they are managed
- practice some of the skills of conservation management
- meet other members and John Muir Trust staff
- experience and have contact with wild places.

**"Do something for wildness and make the mountains glad"**

**(John Muir, 1892)**

### **Overview**

In 2014 there were 25 organised work parties (although one was cancelled before running due to low numbers), plus a wide range of volunteering by individuals and groups such as the John Muir Trust local members groups. These were carried out mostly on Trust properties, but visits were also made to partners and like-minded properties.



The number of work days achieved in the main programme was slightly down on 2013 (closer to the 2012 level) but this can be possibly be explained by several factors:-

- loss of the very popular week long work party at Corroul during 2014 due to building work being carried out on the estate
- an increase in the ad hoc work days being carried out at Glenlude
- an increase in the range and number of local members groups work parties in particular those run by the North East Scotland group

In 2014 there was 679 days volunteering being donated by 122 different people in the main programme .That figure excludes the volunteering done by John Muir Award participants on Trust properties, and by Trust volunteers with their local groups away from Trust properties. It also doesn't include the ad hoc volunteering carried out at Glenlude. Here there were over 230 days of volunteering which was 62 per cent as part of the main programme 29 per cent ad hoc days with the pool of regular volunteers and 9per cent carried out by the local members group from the Borders.

On average each work party had around 11 people on it, but due to the informal way that they are run (people look after their own travel and accommodation) people do drop in and out, usually to fit in hill walks or bags!

### What was achieved?

- Pathwork
  - Over 15,400 metres of path were maintained with popular paths often receiving more than one visit
  - Repairs were carried out to over 150 metres of path including resurfacing, building cross drains, anchor bars, pitching and improving drainage



Paths worked on include East Schiehallion, Sandwood, Coire Dhorrcail, Nevis (Steall gorge, upper Ben & Steall meadow paths) Skye (Blaven, Strath Beag & Sligichan to Marsco paths) Quinag, Little Assynt, Suilven approach track, Gleann Leosaid (Harris) and on Tanera Mor.

- Rubbish
  - Beaches cleaned included 4 cleaned twice at Sandwood (Sandwood Bay, Polin, Dromin & Oldshoremore) Glen Scaladal on Skye, Scalpay, and three beaches on Tanera Mor. In total around 40 ton bags of rubbish were collected and removed from beaches during the year
  - Mountain top rubbish is a reducing problem on Nevis helped by an increased number of other groups helping out during the year but around 15 bags of rubbish were removed by work parties in the year



- Invasives
  - Rhododendrons were removed on Knoydart and Strathaird on Skye
  - Pirri-Pirri was removed on Harris
  - Gorse was controlled at Glencanisp and Strathaird
- Woodland
  - Treeplanting, around 14,000 trees were planted mostly on Harris but also at Glenlude
  - Seed collection was carried out at Glenlude and for the CALL tree nursery
  - Brushing/thinning was carried out on over 3 Ha of ground at Glenlude and in Culag woodland
  - Brush Hedges were created or improved at Glenlude & East Schiehallion



- Fence removal, over 1,700 metres of redundant fencing was removed at Quinag, Steall Meadow and Glenlude
- Glenlude infrastructure, the tree nursery was completed with a secure fence around the polytunnel, landscaping, furniture such as a potting bench and seed trays constructed and the irrigation system completed from a borehole and storage tank. In order to aid timber extraction 25 metres of road was laid and a storage area created.

### **Roundup of activity on work party programme**

#### **John Muir Trust properties**

There were three visits to East Schiehallion although the first in March was much affected by snow down to the car park. Despite this some fencing was removed at low level and in the two subsequent work parties several sections of the path above the fank were completely rebuilt with additional anchor bars sections of pitching and a new surface laid. A project set up by the new East Schiehallion manager Liz Auty to study woodland regeneration inside areas protected by brash hedges was also worked on in the last work party.



On Li & Coire Dhorrcail a very successful work party in April saw a new slipway created for the Trusts boat some rhododendron clearing and pathwork along the whole length of the stalkers/walkers path into Coire Dhorrcail. This included a lot of fresh ditching and the building of revetment to support an “Irish ford” on a section affected by a landslip.

At Nevis there was a disappointingly low turnout for one day work parties on the Ben path with one being cancelled entirely. Two day long parties on the path did however clear around ten bags of rubbish from the summit and carried out some maintenance on the upper sections. A slightly larger group worked in Glen Nevis in July maintaining the Steall gorge path, repaired a section of the path in the upper meadow, removed 200 metres of redundant fencing and helped with both water vole and mountain ringlet butterfly monitoring.



The Trusts most northerly properties Sandwood and Quinag were both visited twice during the year. The ongoing tasks of path repair and beach cleaning were the main features of both Sandwood visits and at Quinag maintenance of the path was interspersed with removing a redundant fence to the north west of Sail Gharbh.

Skye also had two visits with the first starting with a massive beach clean at Glen Scaladale followed by work on the Strath Beag path heading east from Torrinn. The autumn visit was a mixture of rhododendron clearing as well as maintenance on the Blaven, Strath Beag and the Slighan to Marsco paths.

In the Scottish Borders Glenlude hosted six work parties as well as the programme of ad hoc work days and local member's group work parties (see above). These ranged from single days through long weekends to a full week in August. Work carried out included finishing off the poly tunnel and equipping it with items such as seed trays built from reclaimed wooden pallets. Around the estate tasks included brashing, tree planting, seed collecting and building brush hedges and dismantling old stock fencing. A work party for family groups was also held.

### **Partnership properties**

There were two visits to the Western Isles. The first started with planting 8,000 trees for the West Harris Trust as well as continuing some coastal erosion control. With the North Harris Trust we planted a further 1,500 trees at the Ardvourlie community woodland and carried out some invasive control of Piri-Piri in Glen Cravadale. The second visit was entirely with the North Harris Trust carrying out path work in Glean Leosaid then working on Scalpay by the lighthouse beach cleaning as the island has recently been taken over by the community and joined the North Harris Trust.



We had three visits to partners within the Coigach Assynt Living Landscape project (CALL) the first two were timed to coincide with visits to Quinag which falls within the project. Work included weeding, seed collecting and sowing in the CALL tree nursery, path work and gorse control on the Sulven track with the Assynt Foundation also path maintenance on the all ability track at Little Assynt and woodland work on the Culag woods. The third work party was held on the island of Tanera Mor in the Summer Isles where beaches were cleaned and paths worked on including constructing steps and several culverts.

The first partnership that the Trust entered into was with the Knoydart Foundation fifteen years ago and 2014 saw two visits to Inverie. The first was mainly with the Knoydart Forest Trust carrying out rhododendron control but over both we helped in the community woodland as well as removing old fencing along the Invergusseran track and repairs to the stalking path to Mam Li.



### **Local Members Groups**

The most active group was the North East Scotland group who as well as ten daylong work

parties at Glen Taner held two work parties (each 2 days) on the NTS Marr Lodge estate, one on the Balmoral estate and 3 at Portlethen Moss. In all around 30 volunteers donated over 80 days of work.

The Yorkshire Members group held one work party in the Yorkshire Dales.

### Corporate work party

Berghaus, who are gold corporate members of the John Muir Trust sent staff to Glenlude to help with brashing Larch.

### Photographs of activities in 2014



You can see photos of all of these work parties on the Flickr sites listed below and read some reports on individual work parties on the JMT Land news pages

<http://www.jmt.org/news.asp?cat=Land>



- Western Isles [www.flickr.com/groups/westernislesworkparties/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/westernislesworkparties/)
- East Schiehallion [www.flickr.com/groups/schiehallionworkparties/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/schiehallionworkparties/)
- Glen Nevis & Ben Nevis [www.flickr.com/groups/nevisworkparties/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/nevisworkparties/)
- Glenlude [www.flickr.com/groups/glenludeworkparties/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/glenludeworkparties/)
- Sandwood, Quinag and our partners in the Coigach Assynt partnership (CALL) [www.flickr.com/groups/sandwoodquinagcallworkparties/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/sandwoodquinagcallworkparties/)
- Skye and Knoydart (including the Knoydart Foundation and Li & Coire Dhorrcail) [www.flickr.com/groups/skyeknoydartworkparties/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/skyeknoydartworkparties/)
- Local member group volunteers [www.flickr.com/groups/2463314@N25/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/2463314@N25/)



All the photos in this report are taken from the flickr sites where you can see credits for photographers and descriptions of where they were taken.

### 2015

The programme for volunteering in 2015 appears at the John Muir Website at [www.jmt.org/activities-conservation-work-parties.asp](http://www.jmt.org/activities-conservation-work-parties.asp)

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