

FOR MEMBERS OF THE JOHN MUIR TRUST

MEMBERS' NEWS

JANUARY 2014



On the right path



Members place a particularly high value on both the Trust's campaign work and our efforts to protect and conserve wild land. This is just one of the findings from the 2013 membership survey that was distributed last summer and which generated almost 1,100 responses – just over 10% of our overall membership. In all, the survey was sent to around 7,900 households, with the geographic spread of responses – 51% from Scotland, 44% England, 2% Wales and 3% rest of the world – roughly in line with the current spread of our membership.

As long-time members of the Trust – and there are many – will have noted, this latest survey saw questions that were broadly in line with those posed in previous surveys in 2002 and 2008, although it should be said that the objectives of the earlier surveys were slightly different. In particular, the key emphasis of the 2008 survey was to learn more about member perceptions around the branding and marketing of the Trust, which means that the opportunity to benchmark changes between surveys is not always possible on every question.

However, where direct comparisons are possible, they have been made to help establish any changes in motivation for supporting the Trust, personal interests and levels of engagement. We are happy to report that there is much we are doing right in the eyes of members, although there is also plenty to ponder as we consider how the findings might influence the future direction of the Trust.

For much more on the key findings of our 2013 membership survey, please turn to page four.

Our latest survey reveals that almost 93% of respondents feel that it is either 'important' or 'very important' that we own land (such as Quinag, above)

Call for trustees

It's that time of year when we once again invite nominations for candidates to our Board of Trustees. If you'd like to share a love of wild places and help shape the future of the Trust then getting involved at board level is a great opportunity to play your part.

There are five places to fill. Trustees are expected to attend four meetings per year as well as the Trust's AGM and Members' Gathering. Trustees are elected by members of the Trust and run it on their behalf – setting policies and making strategic decisions. If there are more than five candidates, we will hold an election using the Single Transferable Vote system, as specified in the Trust's constitution.

New trustees will serve on the board for three years, from May 2014. Candidates must be members of the Trust over 18 years old, and have their nominations supported by five other members. Nominations must include a personal statement of 300 words.

For more information, or to download a nomination form, see www.jmt.org/trustee-noms.asp, or call Linda Coupar on 01796 470080. Nominations must be received by 3 March.

2014 AGM & Members' Gathering

This year's AGM & Members' Gathering will take place at Dunbar Parish Church and Hall from 2–3 May. All are welcome! For more information, see the enclosed booking form, or our website. www.jmt.org





PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LINTERN

Final push

Fundraising efforts continue as the Trust looks to secure its first land acquisition in Wales

In October, the Trust launched its campaign to buy Carreg y Saeth Isaf, a fabulous piece of wild land in the Rhinogydd, Snowdonia. Our first land purchase outside Scotland has been received enthusiastically by a variety of organisations across Wales, including Natural Resources Wales, Snowdonia Society and the National Park. We have also seen encouraging support from local communities, the farming sector and people who care about wild places across the UK.

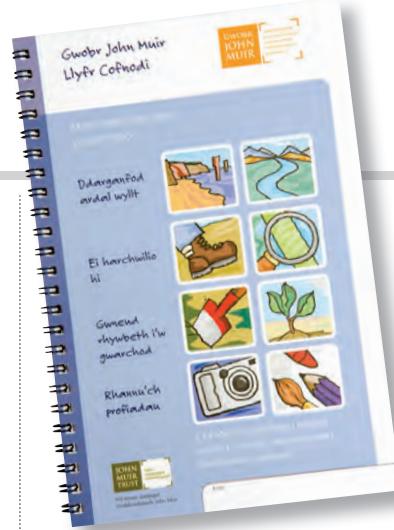
Thanks to the generosity of supporters, we have now raised over £120,000, while we are also delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund will provide additional support through a grant of £47,000. To match this support, the Trust has

Crag and woodland at Carreg y Saeth Isaf

decided to contribute £260,000 from our own land fund.

We are doing well, but still need to raise a further £75,000 to meet the target for acquiring Carreg y Saeth Isaf. The aim is to conclude the purchase in spring (a few legal challenges have delayed the process), but do need to raise the full amount in order to make this acquisition of real value to the Trust – and to bring greater benefit to the wild landscapes of Wales, and the people that enjoy them.

Please help if you can at www.jmt.org/wales, or call 01796 470080. And thank you to all those who have already been so generous in their support.



The front cover of the new Welsh language record books

Launch of Welsh record book resource

Thanks to funding from players of the People's Postcode Lottery, the John Muir Award launched its first Welsh language record books in October. Providers of the Award, including The Urdd, Call of the Wild Ltd, Gwynedd and Anglesey County Councils, Snowdonia and Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks and Welsh language schools have all warmly welcomed the resource. It complements a suite of Welsh language resources, including a translation of the popular Mission: Explore John Muir activity book.

"The John Muir Award helps people to develop their communication and extend their Welsh Language vocabulary; learning words that they would not come across in everyday life," commented Dave Thomas, head facilitator at Call of the Wild.

Scottish Planning Policy update

Following the Scottish Government's consultation on Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3), a specific consultation on Scottish Natural Heritage's Core Areas of Wild Land map took place at the end of the year.

The Trust presented a stout defence of the map as a vital tool in protecting Scotland's wild land and would like to thank members and supporters who also submitted responses. The NPF3 Proposed Plan is expected to be laid before Parliament in January 2014, and will be subject to 60-day Parliamentary scrutiny.

The timetable for the completion of work on the review of the SPP is also now aligned with the publication of NPF3, with an expected publication date of June 2014. The Trust continues to engage with politicians and policy-makers to support the case for these documents to recognise the need to protect wild land.

Hill tracks campaign steps up a gear

The Trust is delighted to see completion of 'Track Changes', the Scottish Environment LINK's hill tracks campaign report, which has now been presented to the Scottish Government. Using information and photographs submitted to the campaign, the report graphically documents the case for bringing the construction of hill tracks into the planning system.

LINK organisations, including the Trust, have campaigned on this issue for many years. In late 2012, the Scottish Government accepted that there is 'compelling evidence' of the damage caused by unregulated hill tracks, but still decided not to amend the legislation.

We hope this new report will finally convince the Government that the

current regulations (or lack of) are a serious cause for concern.

A LINK Hill tracks campaign delegation recently took the Minister for Local Government & Planning into the Pentland Hills to see one of the tracks featured in the report, while a Parliamentary briefing has also been sent to all MSPs. www.scotlink.org/hilltracks

Speaking up for wild land

The Trust continues to fight against inappropriate development in and around wild land – an effort only made possible thanks to the generous support of members

Last summer, the Trust lodged a petition to the Court of Session for a Judicial Review of the decision of the Highland Council South Planning Application Committee to conditionally raise no objection to a proposed 83-turbine wind farm at Stronelaig in the heart of the Monadhliath Mountains. The Judge, Lord Bannatyne, agreed that the Trust was entitled to challenge the Council, even though the final planning decision would be made by the Scottish Government.

Our application for a Protected Expenses Order was refused in October. We then negotiated a joint statement with the Highland Council that acknowledges several key

points about the importance of wild land in planning and the need for consistency when the Scottish Government makes decisions on that basis. In light of this progress and the refusal of the Protected Expenses Order, we withdrew the legal challenge.

Thank you to everyone who responded to our Protect Wild Land appeal. Your donations have been used to pay for legal fees towards the potential Judicial Review, as well as establish a ‘fighting fund’ to challenge inappropriate development and give expert evidence at public inquiries. Your support is invaluable and very much appreciated.

Giving evidence

In October, the Trust’s head of policy, Helen McDade, gave evidence at the Public Local Inquiry into the Glenmorie wind farm in Easter Ross – a 34-turbine development that would have a significant impact on a Search Area for Wild Land.

Local people, organised around the Save Our Straths campaign, expressed appreciation of our support. The Trust is confident that we presented the case effectively and remain hopeful that the Reporter will advise that the development be rejected on landscape and wild land grounds. The Minister’s decision is not expected for up to a year.

More recently, the Trust heard that the Public Local Inquiry for the Dalnessie wind development in Sutherland, at which the Trust will participate, is not now expected to begin until June 2014. The site for this proposed 27-turbine development is close to the Munro Ben Klibreck and an important habitat for black-throated divers. Any members who live within reasonable travelling distance of Lairg, where the inquiry will take place, may be interested in attending. Further details will be available nearer the time from Mel Nicoll, campaigns co-ordinator, on 01796 470080, or campaigns@jmt.org

Call for changes to deer management

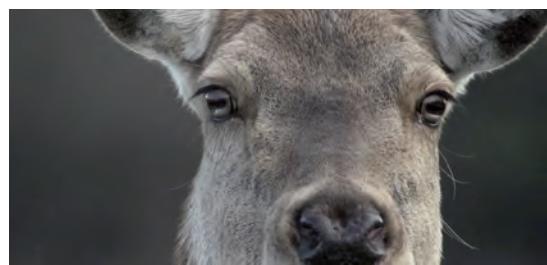
On 13 November, the Trust’s head of land, Mike Daniels, joined RSPB Scotland and the Scottish Wildlife Trust to give evidence to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment committee at the Scottish Parliament about the failures of the voluntary deer management system, and the impact that deer are having on woodlands and other key habitats across Scotland.

In a long session, Mike, who worked for the Deer Commission for Scotland before joining the Trust, explained many of the finer points of deer management in Scotland. He pointed out that deer are an important part of the woodland ecosystem, but numbers have to be reduced to levels the land can sustain. The official transcript of the session is available at www.bit.ly/1drmgt

The following week, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Forest Enterprise, Cairngorms National Park and John Milne, ex chair of the Deer Commission, also gave evidence on the issue. Together, they demonstrated broad consensus, agreeing that there is a problem and key habitats across Scotland are suffering as a result. The

issue achieved widespread media coverage, with Mike featuring on BBC Reporting Scotland, BBC Radio Scotland and BBC Radio 4 Farming Today.

Separately, SNH is still trying to resolve the issues around deer management at the Ardvar Woodlands in Assynt (a portion of which falls on the Trust’s Quinag estate). The woodlands form part of a designated site and are currently in unfavourable, declining condition because of deer impacts. SNH is currently exploring the use of independent mediation.



WATCH OUR NEW FILM!

We've produced a new short film, 'Managing deer for nature', about the need to reduce deer numbers. Featuring Mike Daniels, Fran Lockhart and Don O'Driscoll from the Trust, the film was shot on Quinag in and around the Ardvar Woodlands. Watch it at www.jmt.org/film.asp

Members have their say

Distributed to 7,900 households, and made available online, our 2013 membership survey generated an excellent – and valuable – response. Here are some of the key findings

Much has happened at the Trust over the past five years which is why the primary aim of our 2013 membership survey, our first since 2008, was to re-examine who supports us, and why. We were interested in the usual demographic information, but also in drilling down to gain a sense of what motivates members to join and then continue to support the Trust. Of course, we also took the opportunity to explore whether members think we are doing a good job, whether we are focussing our resources in the right areas, and what members would like to see us do more (or less) of in the future.

As of September 2013, the Trust had 10,285 members, with our survey questionnaire generating a total of 1,088 responses – a response rate of 10.57% (or 13.7% based on household numbers). Not surprisingly, the survey highlighted that members are an active bunch with a great love of the outdoors: nearly 38% of respondents are currently involved in a walking/climbing club, while 97.47% have taken part in walking activities. Many also have a keen interest in wildlife (48%), mountaineering (46%), cycling (44%) and photography (41%).

WHY JOIN US?

It seems that the reasons for joining the

Trust, and staying with us, have changed somewhat in recent years. In one question, we asked members for their top three motivations for joining the Trust, with the responses indicating that our campaigning to protect wild land (82.5%) as well as owning and acquiring land for protection (58.8%) are now particularly strong motivations for supporting us.

Interestingly, our work with local communities, affinity with a particular property, and promoting the ethos of John Muir now strike less of a chord with respondents.

We also wanted to understand whether the Trust had been successful in addressing the issues that had prompted members to join in the first place (and, of course, continue to renew their membership). On this point, 80% of respondents felt the Trust was either successful or very successful in addressing such issues, with a further 15.6% considering us to be partially successful. Given the pressures on our wild land and societal attitudes to conserving the environment, we see this as a good result and a heartening endorsement. That's not to say we are complacent – far from it. We have not been immune to criticism either, which we view as constructive.

A later question exploring Trust

Latest member offers

Cotswold Outdoor is offering Trust members a 15% discount on the full retail value of the current season's product range both in-store and online. Also new to our range of member offers is an opportunity to spend time living and working alongside researchers on a yacht in the Hebrides this summer. The Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust is offering members a 5% discount on marine surveys in 2014, and will donate a further 5% to the Trust. For more details on these and other offers, please see www.jmt.org/participate.asp

governance and strategy reinforced the response about reasons for joining with 'protecting wild land against inappropriate development' considered by far the most important of the Trust's many activities. Enhancing properties through our conservation work and further land acquisition also stood out as key areas of importance.

We delved deeper on the land acquisition side, asking how important it was that we owned land (92.9% said it was either important/very important) and what appetite there was for further acquisitions. In all, 76% said it was important that we acquired more land – including elsewhere in the UK – although some warned of the danger of spreading resources too thinly.

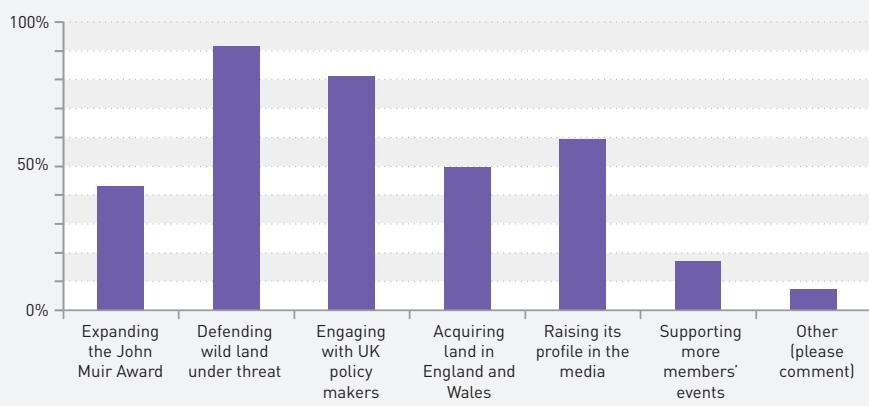
WIDE-RANGING

The survey generated a myriad other responses to a range of questions, including what activities we should focus on if we expand our presence across the UK (see graph below), use of our website, social media and other online tools, plus activities we should introduce or do more of. We also asked about how well and often we communicate, with the survey results indicating that most members feel that receiving four mailings per year is about right. However, with rising paper and postage costs, the Trust is keen to ensure that mailings are as cost-effective and environmentally-friendly as possible, so we plan to review our member communications early in the New Year.

The Trust would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to our latest survey. Our task now is to continue sifting through the findings and gauge how the responses should inform decisions about how we use our resources in the years ahead. As an important part of this process, we plan to establish member-led focus groups that will help us to dig a bit deeper and support our future strategic development.

For more details on the survey results, please get in touch on **01796 470080** or admin@jmt.org, quoting your member number.

Activities in which respondents, who support expansion in the UK, would like to see the Trust engage



Restore and protect

Since the appointment of footpath project officer Chris Goodman two years ago, the Trust has developed a comprehensive strategy for the repair and maintenance of paths on our properties

The fact is that very few paths on Trust ground have been built as such – what we call a path now is merely the result of many people walking the same line to reach a summit, beach, or some other goal, trampling vegetation and exposing soils as they go.

Rather than simply repairing a path, what we are now doing – having gained a better understanding of the pressures placed on particular routes – is contain the environmental impact caused by walking, and then protect and restore the surrounding habitat. The benefit of this approach is that the ‘path’ does not escalate in size (or erosion) and affect the aesthetic qualities of the landscape, or visitors’ experience of it.

Chris has now walked and surveyed

around 120km of paths to establish what condition the ground is in, the dynamic processes in action, and identify (plus cost) sections that are a priority for repair work.

The Trust’s path project application to HLF (which included other elements of training and outreach) was unsuccessful, so we have revised our strategy to focus on repairing the very highest priority sections, expanding the current volunteer base, and developing interpretation to raise awareness of the work we are doing. Substantial support from the Scottish Mountaineering Trust, the Brown Forbes Memorial Fund and our members means we are able to tackle the highest priorities. We will be seeking further funding to restore all

paths on Trust ground to a suitable wild land standard.

The majority of the path repair work will focus on badly-eroded sections of ground in Skye, with further work scheduled at Quinag, Sandwood, Schiehallion and Ben Nevis. Prior to these works, there will be consultations held in Skye and at Lochinver for interested parties to learn more about the work proposed and comment on our plans.

Meanwhile, at Quinag, a local contractor has begun low-key work on the approach to the Bealach a’ Chornaigh using more subtle landscaping and blocking techniques to prevent the development of parallel paths. For more on our path project, please contact Chris at chris.goodman@jmt.org



PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS GOODMAN

Surveying the damaged path on Blabheinn, Isle of Skye

Wild Space takes off

Our new Wild Space visitor centre in Pitlochry has become a popular destination in its own right, with more than 25,000 people coming through the doors since it first opened in April 2013.

The centre’s stimulating exhibitions, inspiring film and tempting products appeal to existing and new supporters alike. More than 70 people have joined the Trust at the Wild Space till – demonstrating that we are reaching a different audience, including younger and newly-aware people.

And finally a visitor book full of comments like: ‘...spectacular advert for, and window on, our wilderness’, ‘most impressive – keep up the great work’ and ‘back to nature before it’s too late...’ shows that we are hitting the right note.

Ringlets return to Nevis

Monitoring by conservation work party volunteers at Nevis in July revealed the return of much higher numbers of mountain ringlet – the UK’s only species of butterfly that is specifically adapted for life at altitude. As a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, the Trust monitors populations of mountain ringlet each year to help determine local presence and wider distribution.

The bulk of this year’s monitoring took place in Coire nan Laogh where the Trust has established three transects for identifying numbers. While recent poor summers have resulted in small numbers being found, this year’s monitoring found up to 30 ringlets on some transect lines – no doubt helped by the warm sunshine on the day.



PHOTOGRAPH: SARAH LEWIS

Volunteers enjoyed glorious weather while monitoring ringlet numbers last summer



Celebrating Muir through Year of Natural Scotland

During 2013, the Trust took an active role in celebrating John Muir's 175th birthday through Year of Natural Scotland, the latest in a series of themed years from the Scottish Government.

As part of celebrations, the John Muir Award was recognised as a Year of Natural Scotland success indicator. With funding support from Government, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP, the Trust has employed Bethan Haston to help meet demand for Award participation and promote Year of Natural Scotland links.

In other developments, the Trust, with funding from SNH and Year of Natural Scotland, has developed www.discoverjohnmuir.com, a one-stop portal for all things Muir, and also teamed with the Geography Collective to create Mission: Explore John Muir – a downloadable series of Muir-related mission activities. The 'missions' have proved so popular that a limited number of hard copies have now been printed (and also translated into Gaelic and Welsh).

Meanwhile, a group of Trust staff and trustees looked to personally recognise Muir through creating their own version of his 1,000-mile walk, one of Muir's most famous adventures. Their journeys can be enjoyed at johnmuir1000milejourney.wordpress.com

Champion walkers

Following the lead of staff in 2013, several supporters have been inspired to take on their own 1,000-mile walks, raising valuable funds for the Trust. Award provider Seamus Corry has taken the novel twist of breaking down his 1,000-mile journey into two million steps. With 500,000 steps already completed, Seamus plans to finish in style by climbing Ben Nevis in June. He can be sponsored at www.justgiving.com/seamuscorry1969

Meanwhile, trustee Heather Alexander will also take up the challenge in January – accompanied by her terrier, Twiglet. Heather can be sponsored at www.justgiving.com/Heather-Alexander155

Finally, fresh from a residency in Dunbar, artist Emma Herman-Smith plans to replicate Muir's original 1,000-mile-walk from Indiana to the Gulf of Mexico. Starting in July, Emma will take three months to complete the journey. You can support her incredible undertaking at mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/emmahermansmith

And remember, if you have any fundraising plans of your own, please contact Adam Pinder on 0131 554 0114, or adam.pinder@jmt.org

Double celebration in the Cairngorms

Last year marked both the 10th Anniversary of the Cairngorms National Park and a decade of Award activity in the park



One of the first decisions taken by the embryonic Cairngorms National Park Authority board in December 2003 was to establish a way to engage communities and young people with the special qualities of the park. Rather than try to reinvent the wheel, it was felt most appropriate to use the John Muir Award – an already proven scheme – and establish a dedicated manager role to take it on.

The Award seemed a perfect fit for the aims and ideals of the UK's largest national park: it focussed on wild places (after all, there are few wilder than the Cairngorms) and tied in with a greater awareness of John Muir, one of the founders of the national park movement. Crucially, the Award also fits with the 'enabling' approach of the Park Authority in terms of shaping the work of others to meet park aims.

Over the past decade, the partnership has gone from strength to strength. Previously a temporary position, the John Muir Award Manager role was made a permanent post within the staff of the Park Authority in 2011, while, to date, more than 18,000 John Muir Awards have been delivered throughout the Cairngorms.

The 10th birthday was celebrated at the Cairngorms Gathering in September, when pupils from local schools performed stories and presented artwork created with storyteller and artist Creeping Toad to celebrate Muir and the wider national park system.

Attendees at the Cairngorms Gathering – including the Award's own Al Smith doing his best John Muir

A monster of a run

In a remarkable feat of endurance, Bill Wallace Grant recipients Katharine and David Lowrie have become the first to run the entire length of South America unsupported. After 14 months, 23 days, 19 hours and 24 minutes, the couple finished their 6,504-mile journey by running into the Caribbean Sea on 21 October. Read more about their epic adventure at www.5000mileproject.org/blog

The Bill Wallace Grant is now open for independent adventurers in 2014. For more, see www.jmt.org/bill-wallace-grant.asp





Wild Days 2014

Sun hats all round
in Knoydart

Led by Trust staff, Wild Days are special member-only events that offer a chance to learn how we look after land on our properties. Here's what you can sign up for in 2014

17 MAY, SCHIEHALLION

Discover the 'attraction of mountains' at the home of the 18th century experiment to weigh the earth.

22 MAY, QUINAG

See how Chris Goodman and team are reshaping paths in the far northwest.

23 MAY, SANDWOOD BAY

A day with Don O'Driscoll exploring the coastal machair habitat of this wonderfully remote area.

18 JUNE (PM), KNOYDART

Speed across Loch Hourn for first-hand experience of extensive woodland regeneration at our first property. Places limited to four.

19 JUNE (AM), KNOYDART

A second chance to visit this remote property – with Lester Standen as your guide. Places limited to four.

20 JUNE, SKYE

A guided walk with Ally Macaskill following parts of the Skye Trail near Elgol and Camasunary.

19 JULY, GLENLUDE

Visit our volunteer HQ on a summer weekend and see how we are developing a seed source in the heart of the Borders.

22 AUGUST, GLEN NEVIS

A gorge of Himalayan grandeur, come and experience mountaineer WH Murray's 'best half mile in Scotland'.

Although there is no charge for our Wild Days this year, donations are always welcome! For more details and to sign up, contact Linda Coupar on 01796 484934, or email linda.coupar@jmt.org

Many hands make light work

In November, Don O'Driscoll, the Trust's conservation manager for Sandwood and Quinag, was joined by a 25-strong team of enthusiastic volunteers from Wilderness Scotland, one of our Gold Corporate Members. Already in the area for the organisation's annual staff gathering, the team joined Don for an afternoon on Quinag – removing some two tonnes of old stock fencing from the mountain in just a couple of hours.

"I was so impressed by the enthusiasm and motivation of the Wilderness Scotland team," commented Don. "It was a privilege to be out on the hill with them."

Conservation work party dates

We have another fantastic line-up of conservation work party opportunities for 2014

Date	Location	Proposed activity
21-24 February	Glenlude	Tree nursery, planting & general
22 March	East Schiehallion	Path maintenance
28-31 March	Glenlude	Woodland & general
7-11 April	Knoydart Foundation (Inverie)	Invasive species
14-19 April	Western Isles	Planting with West Harris Trust and North Harris Trust
25-28 April	Li & Coire Dhorrail (Knoydart)	Path work
4 May	Glenlude	General (to coincide with Trust AGM at Dunbar)
9-12 May	East Schiehallion	Path construction
24-26 May	Sandwood	Path work, beach cleaning & general
31 May	Ben Nevis	Summit litter clean, path maintenance
30 May-2 June	Skye estates	Paths, beach cleaning, invasive control & general
9-13 June	Quinag & CALL (Coigach & Assynt)	Quinag: fence removal & path maintenance; CALL project members: general
20-23 June	Knoydart Foundation (Inverie)	Path work, beach cleaning & general
27-30 June	Glenlude	General
11-14 July	Glen Nevis	Monitoring, fence removal, path work, Ben & Carn Mor Dearg summit litter clean
4-8 August	Sandwood	Path work, beach cleaning & general
23-24 August	Ben Nevis	Summit litter clean, path maintenance
25-31 August	Glenlude	General, including thank you BBQ for volunteers
4-7 Sept	Quinag & CALL (Coigach & Assynt)	Quinag: fence removal & path maintenance; CALL project members: general
8-12 Sept	Western Isles	Path work, beach cleaning (to coincide with North Harris Mountain Festival)
19-22 Sept	Skye estates	Path work, beach cleaning, invasive control & general
20 Sept	Ben Nevis	Summit litter clean, path maintenance
27-28 Sept	East Schiehallion	Path maintenance
6-10 Oct	Tanera Mor (CALL)	General
7-10 Nov	Glenlude	General

Find out more at www.bit.ly/jmtcwp

To keep up-to-date with volunteer work parties, simply join our email listing at workparties@jmt.org

Dates for your diary

This year, the life and achievements of John Muir will be celebrated – 100 years after his death – in the Year of Homecoming in Scotland. Highlights to look out for in April include a new John Muir Festival (17–26 April), and the opening of the John Muir Way, a new coast-to-coast trail across central Scotland. These and other events will feature around John Muir Day on 21 April.

In addition, the Trust will participate in The John Muir Conference – National Parks and Protected Areas for the 21st Century, in Perth (12–14 May). Information on these and other events can be found at www.bit.ly/jmc21c

Whisky galore



Congratulations to Ray and Rosalyn Heaton (pictured) – the winners of our summer draw to win a whisky tasting pack and two Glencairn tasting glasses, donated by

The Scotch Whisky Experience. Ray and Rosalyn Heaton signed up for our e-newsletter at the 2020VISION theatre show at the Royal Geographical Society in London in May. The Trust would like to thank the Heatons and everyone else who signed up for our e-newsletter at events during 2013.

New life for old gear

The Trust has teamed with Gift Your Gear, a nationwide initiative that enables unwanted outdoor gear to be used by community organisations, youth groups and charities working with young people in the outdoors, including the John Muir Award. During March, we urge you to donate unwanted outdoor clothing to Gift Your Gear at any Rohan Shop. The scheme covers all outdoor clothing (adult and children) as well as walking boots, regardless of brand. www.bit.ly/1gygr



Southern Members' Gathering

Some 75 members and friends – possibly a record number – from across southern England and Wales gathered for this year's event in Bristol in November. Proceedings were launched by Trust chairman, John Hutchison, who updated the audience on a wide range of Trust activities, including the imminent purchase of wild land in Snowdonia (see page two).

Later, Sandy Maxwell inspired us on the volunteering front, while Martin Hartley – one of the few professional photographers to have crossed the Arctic Ocean on foot and with dogs – delighted us with a beautiful slide show that didn't neglect the discomforts and dangers of such a trip.

The afternoon session addressed the pros and cons of conservation grazing, with Bill Morris, head ranger at the National Trust's Leigh Woods, discussing the use of Red Devon cattle and Mandy Leivers, biodiversity officer for the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project, outlining the use of feral goats to help restore wildflower-rich grassland by controlling scrub.



Members explore the Avon gorge during the gathering's Wild Bristol walk

Fraser Bridgeford – one of the organising gang – then provided an update on possible future Southwest Group activities, after which many of us adjourned to Fraser's local for supper and a pint or two. Some of those who survived the evening session reconvened the following morning for a local Wild Bristol walk.

Active autumn for members' groups

In November, local members' groups gathered in various parts of the country with an array of speakers from the Trust and other environmental organisations.

The North West Highland Members' Forum took place in Ullapool and was followed by the 2020VISION nature photography road show which drew a crowd of members and non-members alike. Elsewhere, the Southern Members' Gathering in Bristol saw record numbers (see story above), while both the Edinburgh and North East Members' Groups were supported by Trust staff who provided updates on various aspects of our work. Finally, in the Borders, the regional manager from Scottish Natural Heritage spoke about the agency's role in protecting the countryside in the south of Scotland.

The Trust would like to thank members who organise local group activities and, of course, all those who support by attending. Please keep an eye on our website for upcoming events in your area.

Keep in touch

- Sign up to our monthly e-message, email – membership@jmt.org
- Keep up-to-date on events and local activities – www.jmt.org/events.asp
- Follow us online via Facebook and Twitter @JohnMuirTrust
- You can also receive your Journal & Members' News electronically – email membership@jmt.org

Tell us your news

What have Trust members and local groups been up to? Tell us your news and stories. Call Iona on 01796 470080 or email promotions@jmt.org

The John Muir Trust Members' News is printed on Revive 100 Uncoated which is an FCS-certified 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 process. We use a Scottish printer with excellent environmental credentials.

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: MARK HAMBLIN/2020VISION

WALKER ON THE SUMMIT OF TOM NA GRUAICH (922M), BEINN ALLIGIN, TORRIDON, SCOTLAND