

JOHN MUIR TRUST

JOURNAL

70 SPRING 2021

- 16 Care and repair – celebrating 21 years of looking after Ben Nevis
- 20 Rural communities and the impacts of visitor pressures
- 28 How you have stayed connected with wildness during lockdown



A grand vision

How Scotland can deliver large-scale natural carbon capture

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28



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19

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COVER: REGENERATING BIRCH AND ROWAN, CREAG MEAGAIHD NNR BY MARK HAMBLIN/SCOTLANDBIGPICTURE.COM

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REGULARS

- 05 Chief Executive's welcome
- 06 News round-up
- 32 Books
Regeneration: The Rescue of a Wild Land, by Andrew Painting; *English Pastoral: An Inheritance*, by James Rebanks; *The Lives of Bees, The Untold story of the Honey Bee in the Wild*, by Thomas D. Seeley
- 34 Interview
Daisy Clark speaks with sports broadcaster Andrew Cotter about his love of spending time in the mountains with his now rather famous dogs, Olive and Mabel

FEATURES

- 10 Thinking big
Ahead of Scottish Parliament elections in May, the Trust has launched a bold manifesto, which includes a proposal for large-scale, natural carbon capture on land
- 15 The next step
Mike Daniels reflects on the launch of a year-long study to gauge public attitudes around the possible reintroduction of Eurasian lynx to the Scottish Highlands
- 16 A storied mountain
From giants to geologists, guides and climbers, **Mick Tighe** charts some of the rich folklore and history associated with Ben Nevis
- 19 Coming of age
As the Trust celebrates 21 years of caring for Ben Nevis, **Nathan Berrie** looks back on a busy couple of decades
- 20 Frontline realities
Cecilie Dohm reports on the Trust's visitor management research and the experience of speaking with rural communities about the impacts of visitor pressures
- 24 Answering the call
As we enter the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, **Ali Wright** explores the Trust's response to the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change
- 28 Staying wild
Phil Stubbington explores how a variety of people associated with the Trust have managed to stay connected with the wild during this most challenging of years
- 30 Time to plan
With restrictions gradually beginning to ease, now is a perfect time to plan a Journey for Wildness. **Julie Gough** is inspired by three people who have done exactly that



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Holistic approach to change

OVER this past year, businesses, NGOs and governmental agencies around the world have been forced to change the way they work and find new ways of communicating and collaborating. Knowing what we know now, it is hard to imagine a return to the days when senior business executives would routinely board a transatlantic flight to attend a one-day meeting.

For the future of our planet, that's good news. For many years, the John Muir Trust has argued that, in addition to looking for greener ways of generating more power, we also need a stronger focus on reducing our overall energy consumption. To show that's not just empty words, we have taken serious steps to reduce our own carbon footprint, including the very recent appointment of a dedicated Carbon Officer whose role is to spearhead a collective effort by staff and Trustees to ensure we become a 'carbon credible' organisation.

We prefer to use that term rather than the more familiar 'net zero' which has an emphasis on production of carbon while neglecting consumption. We intend to take a more holistic approach, looking at everything we do, from the management of our land to how staff commute to work.

Society-wide changes in working practices also offer new hope to some of our most vulnerable rural communities. These past 12 months have demonstrated the power of technology to break down geographic barriers. With the right infrastructure in place, including universal high-speed broadband and more affordable housing for young people, deserted glens in the Scottish Highlands and other fragile rural areas could be brought back to life. Central to that, however, will be the question of how Scotland and the rest of the UK uses and manages our land.

As we go to press, the Scottish Government has just announced its response to the report published earlier this year by the independent Deer Working Group and I'm delighted to say that it's great news. Out of 99 recommendations set out in the report, the Scottish Government has accepted 91, including all the substantial changes that we and others in the environmental sector have been campaigning for over many years. The changes will require major legislation in the months and years to come, but at long last a new dawn appears to be breaking over the horizon.

In the meantime, ahead of the Scottish election on 6 May, we have published our own manifesto which sets out eight policy priorities which ensure our work achieves a healthy balance that meets the needs of communities, nature and climate. This manifesto includes a pioneering new policy to accelerate changes in land management in the face of the climate emergency. The policy is explained in detail on page 10.

In this issue, we also carry an important feature on the impact of tourism on local communities who live in and around some of the land in our care and other popular visitor destinations.

With international travel likely to be scaled back for the foreseeable future, millions of people across the UK are starting to rediscover places closer to home which



may not guarantee instant sunshine but do offer breathtaking scenery and a relationship with nature that no Mediterranean beach could ever match.

I am delighted that more and more people are making a connection with our magnificent mountains, woodlands, rivers and coastlines in every corner of the UK. Even a short visit to one of Britain's wild places can be the first step along the road to fully appreciating and fighting to protect our natural assets. Personally, I have no problem if that journey involves a barbecue, or a beer in the open air – the mantra is leave only footprints.

At the same time, we know that some of our communities are concerned that existing facilities and infrastructure are not geared up to cope with a surge in visitor numbers on a repeat scale of last summer. Many feel that their voices are not always heard by the bigger tourist businesses, nor by local and national politicians.

The Trust has always tried to stand up not just for nature, but also for the people and communities who live in and around our wild places. It is in that spirit that we undertook extensive research based not on impersonal data but on the living experience of communities for whom tourism has become a double-edged sword: economic and social benefits on one side, but disruption and thoughtless behaviour on the other. You can read more about that research on page 20.

Finally, I would like to provide a wholehearted plug for the Trust's new website, which launched in March. Bright, attractive, user friendly and outward facing, it is an impressive showcase of the breadth and diversity of our work. Well done to everyone involved in getting the site up and running. I invite you all to have a good look through the new-look site.

David Balharry
Chief Executive, John Muir Trust

Langholm land purchase finalised

The south of Scotland's largest community buyout, supported by a £100,000 investment from the Trust, has been completed and work can start on creating the new Tarras Valley Nature Reserve

The legal work for the Langholm Initiative to purchase 5,200 acres was completed towards the end of March and the community development trust is now recruiting two roles. These posts, supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and South of Scotland Enterprise respectively, will help get the community up and running as a new landowner.

A new Estate Manager will develop an integrated land management plan for the new Tarras Valley Nature Reserve and kickstart a number of environmental projects on the ground, while a Development Manager will consolidate existing revenue streams and develop new ones to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of the project.

Meanwhile, the Langholm Initiative has received funding from NatureScot to help plan for an expected increase in visitors post lockdown. One of the key aims and challenges of the project is to promote sustainable eco-tourism, while protecting the sensitive areas of the site.

The Trust's new Land Operations Manager, Kevin Cumming (pictured), is also a member of the Langholm Initiative's board of directors. He acknowledged the importance of the Trust's initial financial contribution to the purchase and ongoing support, and also paid tribute to the many Members who donated to the purchase.

"The Langholm Initiative is overwhelmed and humbled by the support people have offered, both financial and through offering their time to volunteer once the reserve is up and running," commented Kevin.

"The community buyout at Langholm is a wonderful example of the Trust supporting communities to help achieve their goals while also working towards our own objectives to preserve and repair wild land and places."

For much more on the plans at Langholm, visit langholminitiative.org.uk



Views over what will become the new Tarras Valley Nature Reserve at Langholm



PHOTOGRAPH: LIZ AUTY

Temporary car park plans for Schiehallion

Anticipating another busy season at Schiehallion, the Trust is working with Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) and Perth and Kinross Council to encourage visitors to consider their plans carefully. A new temporary overspill car park and extra bins for 2021 are planned but may not be in place for the first wave of visitors once lockdown eases.

The 25-space Braes of Foss car park, owned by FLS, was overwhelmed last summer. Rather than moving on if there were no spaces, many car drivers still tried to squeeze in - leading to inappropriately parked vehicles, abandoned cars and, ultimately, a host of fixed penalty notices being issued.

Liz Auty, the Trust's Schiehallion Manager, commented: "The existing car park is completely inadequate for the demand and cars are often parked on nearby roads, causing massive problems. We're looking at what options we have for a long-term fix, but also more urgently for the peak visiting period this year."

With a second post-lockdown surge expected, there are stricter enforcement plans in place, with police poised to issue parking fines and tow vehicles which are blocking access. Communications are planned to encourage visitors to consider their journeys very carefully and check the local situation before setting off.

Even so, Trust staff are concerned that the site will not cope. "It's not just the road traffic that's the issue, but the increase in litter," added Liz. "It would be better if everyone could just take their litter home and abide by the 'leave no trace' principle. It would make everyone's experience so much more pleasant."



PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN LELLAND

Burning remains common practice

Calls for more meaningful ban on burning

At the end of January 2021, the UK Government announced plans to legislate to prevent the burning of heather and other vegetation on protected blanket bog habitats.

While this sounded promising, the ban that was subsequently proposed had an extremely narrow application as it would only cover burning on 'specified vegetation'; on areas of deep peat (over 40cm depth); and on Sites of Special Scientific Interest that are also Special Areas of Conservation or a Special Protection Area.

Even if the land area meets all those criteria, there are exemptions: a ban would not automatically apply on rocky or steep terrain, for example, while a licence could still be applied for that would allow burning.

The Trust signed a letter from Wildlife and Countryside Link members to the Environment Minister which urged the proper protection of peatlands. It pointed out that the narrow set of circumstances in which the ban would apply means "around 70 per cent of upland peat in England is excluded from the ban from the word go" and, taking the exemptions into account, "at worst, could render the ban almost completely ineffective".

We will continue to lend our voice to calls for a meaningful ban on burning peat in the UK's uplands, recognising exemptions are needed for public safety and restoration in exceptional and clearly defined circumstances.

Issue of ATV guidelines a positive first step

In early March 2021, we welcomed new guidance for landowners on the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) published by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. This guidance, which stemmed from an idea from the Trust, establishes a voluntary standard for best practice and will be distributed to colleges, ATV training providers and other industry bodies to improve understanding of how ATVs should be driven responsibly over open hillside.

In welcoming the guide, we recognise that ATVs are a useful means for land managers around the country to carry out essential activity. If used carefully, their impacts can be minimised, and this guide is a helpful first step towards reducing their impact on fragile upland habitats.



PHOTOGRAPH: DON O'DRISCOLL

ATV tracks on an open hill

Celebrate John Muir Day 2021

Over the years, John Muir's legacy has motivated thousands to enjoy and take action for wild places across the globe. For this year's **#JohnMuirDay** – centred on Muir's birthday on 21 April – we want to explore and celebrate people who inspire and motivate us today.

In a time of restrictions and recovery, we invite everyone to share their stories of the people who inspire them – campaigners, artists, neighbours, rangers, scientists, writers, grandmothers, teachers, celebrities, youth workers, volunteers, outdoor guides and many more. Please join us in shining a light on your modern-day motivator using **#JohnMuirDay** on social media.

Wild Space to re-open in May

The Trust's Wild Space team are preparing to re-open our Pitlochry visitor centre in early May, subject to government guidelines. The facility will open with a beautiful wildlife photography exhibition by Nigel Spencer who donated two images for our sell-out 2020 Christmas Card collection.

Ahead of the much-anticipated re-opening we would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who bought cards, diaries, calendars and much more online last winter, bearing with our reduced team and the vagaries of the Royal Mail's delivery service resulting from the pandemic.

We are extremely grateful for your continuing goodwill and encourage you to keep checking in to see our new product range later in the year. Wild Space will also continue to stock our ever-popular camouflage Buffs and "Keep it Wild" caps, plus symbolic gifts like Plant a Tree and Adopt an Acre. All profits support our work to protect wild places. Find out more at johnmuirtrust.org/shop

Finally, as proud supporters of Gift Your Gear – a Rohan initiative that provides outdoor clothing to community organisations, youth groups and charities, across the UK – we encourage you to donate your old usable outdoor kit or clothing at rohan.co.uk/giftyourgear



The Trust's Wild Space visitor centre in Pitlochry

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LINTERN

Wild places and learning

John Muir Trust research has highlighted how engaging with wild places through the John Muir Award is helping schools restart a Covid-19 recovery curriculum and improve attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

The research indicated the extent to which wild places offer a rich curriculum context for schools. It found that the John Muir Award helps build teacher confidence in outdoor learning, as well as positively engaging pupils. Taking action for wild nature also helps schools explore a variety of global sustainability issues.

Research included a four-year Scottish Attainment Challenge partnership with East Ayrshire Council that was recently extended until April 2022.

Willie White, Education Officer at East Ayrshire Council, commented: "As well as being popular with teaching staff and learners in East Ayrshire, it is great to see that the John Muir Award improves pupils' social and emotional wellbeing, particularly for pupils with poverty as a barrier to learning."

Welcome news for Scotland's major tourism hotspots

At the end of last year, we shared a draft manifesto for the 2021 Holyrood elections and requested meetings with all the main political parties in Scotland. Meetings with representatives from the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party and Scottish Labour Party followed.

One of our asks was to 'increase the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund as part of national strategy to spread out visitor numbers geographically and seasonally', so when the Scottish Government announced in February 2021 that it would double the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund from £3 million to £6 million, we welcomed the news.

Moving forward, we would now like to see this funding distributed in a way that is strategic – in other words, where needed, not just where applied for – as part of a wider green recovery from Covid-19, and a national effort to protect our natural environment and invest in rural communities.

Trust launches new-look website

Our revitalised website launched in mid-March – creating a more user-friendly experience that better reflects the Trust's vision and mission. The overhaul has introduced a host of technical improvements to drive the effectiveness of the site, making it as easy as possible for visitors to support our work and take action for wild places. Have a look around at johnmuirtrust.org



The Trust would like to connect even more young people with wild places throughout Wales



PHOTOGRAPH: NATURAL RESOURCES WALES

John Muir Award expands in Wales

Natural Resources Wales has agreed to part-fund a major project that will significantly increase the John Muir Award's presence and involvement with schools and groups throughout Wales

Building on a successful pilot project in 2018-2019, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has agreed to support more than 13,000 people to connect with Wales' wild places and to act for nature. It will part-fund a three-year project by investing £220,000 – 50 per cent of the total needed.

The sum will help the Trust develop the infrastructure and capacity to support a growing network of schools, leaders, community groups and families who will engage with the John Muir Award throughout the project and beyond.

A tailored, regional-based approach will enable every school in Wales to receive high-quality information, advice and guidance from the Trust's Award team. It will also enable educators to access a suite of free Welsh language and curriculum-focused resources, as well as training and development opportunities, so they can support young people to connect with the wild places of Wales.

Sue Williams, NRW's Lead Advisor for Health, Education and Natural Resources, said: "The John Muir Award is a cost-effective way for us to support opportunities for meaningful nature connection activities at scale throughout Wales. The Award is accessible to a diversity of audiences and the John Muir Trust is experienced at working with groups often under-represented in nature conservation.

"Many charities, schools and small businesses in Wales benefit from being able to freely access the Award and we are delighted to be able to support this."



PHOTOGRAPH: MARK HANBLIN

Wild Land Areas are a key component of Scotland's overall natural capital

Wild Land Areas and the green economy

In February 2021, the Trust submitted its response to the Scottish Government's Position Statement on Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4), Scotland's next national plan for development and infrastructure. A draft of the framework is expected to be presented to the Scottish Parliament in September 2021; in the meantime, the Position Statement indicates the government's policy direction.

Our response made a case for retaining Wild Land Areas in

NPF4. We argued that Wild Land Areas are essential as part of Scotland's natural capital and are a rural community asset, can support nature recovery and sequester carbon, and can also form part of a spatial framework for directing where any new large-scale renewable energy development should be appropriately sited.

We made it clear that we do not consider rural repopulation to be at odds with protecting wild land. Finally, we requested the retention of existing planning policies that give Wild Land Areas protection as part of a spatial framework for onshore wind development.



Trust joins COP26 Coalition

The John Muir Trust seeks to join with like-minded individuals and organisations as part of a collective civil society effort to coordinate voices, events and actions in the run-up to the UN climate change summit, COP26, to be held in Glasgow this November.

The COP26 Coalition unites a diverse membership and calls for the summit to be a moment for real change. It aims to use the time leading up to COP26 to strengthen the Scottish, UK and international climate justice movement for system change, and to enable civil society to use the COP26 as leverage to make gains at a domestic level.

"By joining the Coalition, we want to show publicly that we align with a diverse cross-section of society who recognise the climate emergency," explained the Trust's Toby Clark.

As well as raising awareness of the multiple crises we're witnessing, the Coalition also aims to highlight the pace and scale of change required to address the injustice which climate change is already causing around the world.

Legacy grant supports six more adventurers

The 2021 Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant will help half a dozen more people seek out life-changing experiences in wild places, in ways that will benefit them and the wild places they visit.

This year's educational and scientific adventures take place closer to home with our latest grant recipients planning to head to Scotland and its islands in search of adventure and knowledge:

- Youth and community worker Rehna Yaseen will take 15 young people from Ashton under Lyne, East Manchester on a winter mountaineering course in the Cairngorms

- Experienced outdoor instructor Rebecca Amos will travel to Stornoway by train and boat and then pack-raft from the most northerly point on Lewis to the most southerly point of Barra in order to explore ancient spiritual landmarks
- PhD student Will Smith will travel from Oxford to the Outer Hebrides where he will gather data about Scottish rock doves
- Peatland ecologist Sarah Crowe will cycle through remote parts of the Highlands to survey and draw hard-to-reach peatland sites for the National Plant Monitoring Scheme
- Ecologist Leah Farquharson will trek, kayak, cycle and climb to document Scotland's rare native plants as well as more common species
- Marine scientist Katie Dyke will undertake cetacean surveys on the Shiant islands in the Outer Hebrides.

The Trust's Rosie Simpson, who administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant, said: "We hope these grants offer the six adventurers some hope of a brighter year ahead and look forward to hearing what they learn and how their activities have contributed towards making the world a wilder place."



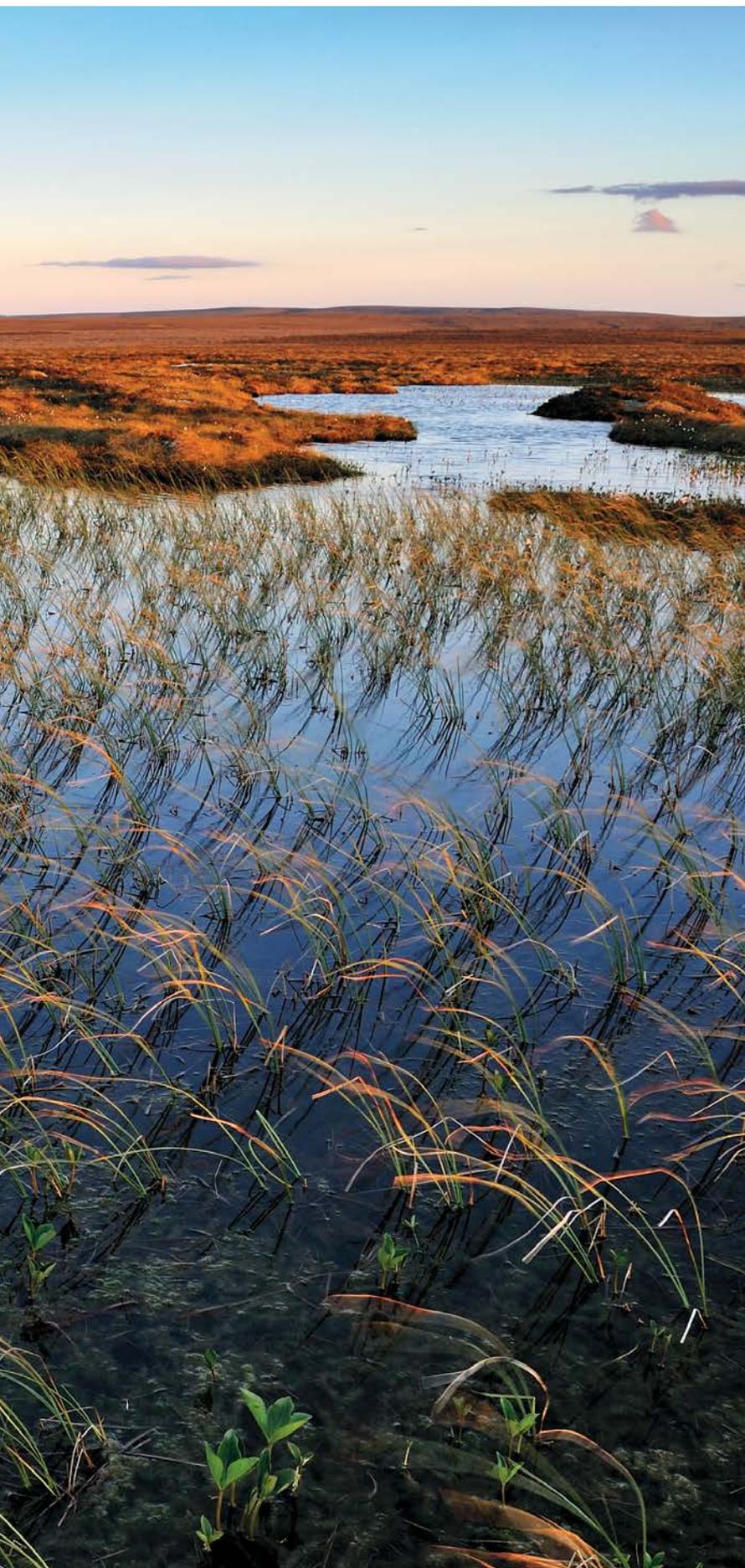
PHOTOGRAPH: LEAH FARQUHARSON

Leah Farquharson is one of six recipients of the 2021 grants



PHOTOGRAPH: LORNE GILL/2020VISION

Our largest terrestrial carbon store, Scotland's blanket and lowland bogs have a vital role to play



Thinking big

With elections to the Scottish Parliament due on 6 May, the Trust has launched a bold manifesto that includes an innovative proposal for large-scale, natural carbon capture on land. Here, we reproduce a detailed policy statement explaining the details of that proposal

THE Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 sets a bold target to reduce emissions of all greenhouse gases to net zero by 2045 at the latest, with an interim target of a 75 per cent reduction by 2030. This will require a major shift in the use of Scotland's resources, not least in the way that land is managed.

Proportionate to its population, Scotland has an exceptionally large landmass – with six and a half times as much land per head of population as England. The geographical Highlands, which accounts for more than half of Scotland's total landmass, is the most sparsely populated region in Europe apart from northern Scandinavia. Consequently, Scotland is in a stronger position than most to deliver major carbon reductions by transforming the way its land is managed.

Left to its own devices, land would be a natural carbon store. While we need farmland to produce food, much of Scotland's terrain consists of agriculturally less productive uplands and peatlands. For tens of thousands of years, these areas – apart from the highest, rockiest mountain tops – were home to vast, pristine woodlands and peatlands which locked in immense quantities of carbon. But over many millennia, and especially in recent centuries, human activity has stunted the enormous potential for carbon sequestration from our land.

Today, Scotland's poorest quality agricultural land punches far below its weight when it comes to delivering public benefits, including climate targets. The geographic scale of these areas is illustrated in two maps from the RSPB and the Scottish Government on page 14.

PEATLAND AND WETLAND

Scotland's blanket bogs and lowland raised bogs cover more than 20 per cent of its total landmass. They are our largest terrestrial carbon store, holding about 1.6 billion tonnes of carbon in the ground – equivalent to more than 180 years of Scotland's entire greenhouse gas emissions at current rates. However, more than 80 per cent of these peatlands are damaged or degraded. Recent estimates by the Scottish Government suggest that these damaged peatlands release around six million tonnes of carbon (6 MtCO_{2e}) every year. As the chart showing different sources of greenhouse gas emissions on page 13 illustrates, that figure is almost as high as the 6.2 MtCO_{2e} greenhouse gas emissions from Scotland's 2.5 million residential households.

While Scotland is famous for its peatlands, there are also many other important types of wetlands, mainly

Our eight-point manifesto

1. Deliver large-scale natural carbon capture on land through phasing in a carbon tax for large-scale landowners.
2. Develop a strategy for Scotland's Wild Land Areas with the aim of realising their potential environmental, ecological, economic, educational, and health benefits.
3. Create six dedicated John Muir Award Development Officer posts to cover all 32 of Scotland's local authority areas.
4. Set out a clear spatial strategy to ensure that areas valued for their ecological, landscape and wildness qualities are protected from large-scale development.
5. Double the Scottish Land Fund for community ownership to £20 million a year.
6. Introduce a new Deer Act that delivers major reform in the public interest.
7. Support a Scottish Environment Act to clean up our air, soils, seas and rivers, and to protect and restore our wild places.
8. Maintain the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund at £6m annually for the next five years and develop a national strategy to spread out visitor numbers beyond the popular hotspots.

[Note: although this manifesto is specifically aimed at the Scottish Parliament, we hope to adapt some of these ideas in the near future for Senedd Cymru – the Welsh Parliament – and Westminster.]

around lochs, rivers, and the coastline. As well as playing a vital role in flood defence, swamps, fens, salt marshes, wet grassland, wet woodland and wet heathland are also vital carbon stores. Although smaller in scale than peatlands, coastal wetlands such as salt marshes have the highest rates of carbon sequestration per hectare of all our natural systems. Yet these and other sensitive wetlands are under constant threat of damage and destruction from built development, agricultural drainage, vehicle damage and rising sea levels as a result of climate change.

WOODLAND

A new study focused on Scotland's uplands by the School of Earth and Environment at the University of Leeds has demonstrated the colossal potential for carbon removal and storage that could be achieved by native woodland regeneration and planting beyond areas currently identified. It estimates that "native woodland could expand to cover an additional 3.9 million hectares of the Scottish uplands, removing an average of 6.96 MtCO₂e a year". This suggests Scotland's lower productivity agricultural land has the potential, through woodland and peatland restoration, to reduce national carbon emissions by just under 13 MtCO₂e a year – the equivalent of removing every single vehicle from Scotland's roads.

Until recently, much of the assessment of carbon sequestration potential for woodlands has focused on commercial timber, which is generally faster growing than native woodland. The wrong type of tree planting in the wrong place, however, can be counter-productive in the long term. A report in October 2020 for Ireland's Department of Agriculture found that the country's forest estate has turned from a carbon sink into a net emitter of greenhouse gases. Industrial-style commercial planting with large-scale soil disturbance during the mechanical planting operation, followed by clear-felling, produces a huge loss of carbon by changing soil dynamics far into the future.

Conversely, recent international research has shown that forests containing a variety of tree species can store twice as much carbon as the average monoculture plantation. While native woodland generally takes longer to remove greenhouse gases, it can store



PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES SHOOTER

carbon for many centuries through natural regeneration. It also offers multiple other benefits to society such as improved soil fertility; flood alleviation; enhanced visual amenity; recreational opportunities; high-quality sustainable wood products; and, crucially, increased habitat and biodiversity.

GRASSLAND AND FARMLAND

Scotland has lost much of its carbon-rich grasslands as a result of centuries of ever-intensifying agriculture. Yet that damage can be reversed through better managed farmlands – for example, by returning to rotational natural grazing. Our remaining healthy grasslands survive only in places where traditional farming and crofting is practiced.

With the end of the Common Agricultural Policy, the future of Scottish farming may best be secured by embracing change. As Donald MacKinnon, Chair of the Scottish Crofting Federation, recently pointed out: "The climate emergency is going to dominate all we do and crofters have an important part to play, having a very sound record in good management of our environment. A significant proportion of high nature value areas in Scotland are under crofting tenure, for example the machair, known for its incredible biodiversity, and peatlands, which are the best ecosystems for sequestering carbon. Crofting is starting from a good position, but we can always do more to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions."

DELIVERING CARBON CAPTURE

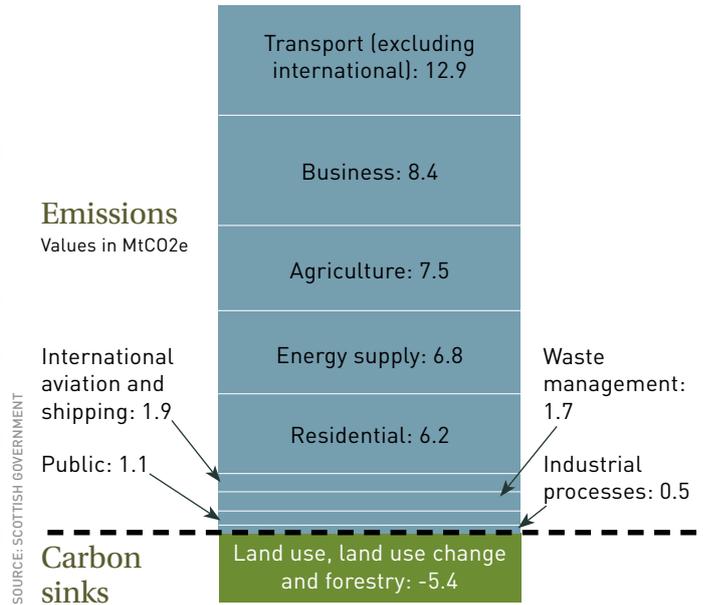
The urgency of the climate emergency demands that we introduce regulatory measures to maximise the carbon storage potential of Scotland's uplands. By taking bold action, Scotland can become a global leader in natural climate solutions.

We welcome and support the programmes of woodland expansion and peatland restoration that are already underway, and their ambitious targets. By boosting that action, we can far exceed the greenhouse gas targets set by the Scottish Government, so making an exceptional contribution to the global struggle to halt climate change.

As a nation we need to play our part in delivering



Sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland



environmental, social and inter-generational justice both at home and globally. We believe it is imperative that large landowners who are not currently supporting woodland and peatland restoration take their share of responsibility for achieving a transition to a net zero economy.

To that end, we propose phasing in a carbon tax for large-scale landowners throughout Scotland, starting with a pilot scheme on properties in excess of 10,000ha before rolling it out to all landholdings in excess of 1,000ha. Land owned by local authorities, housing associations, community land trusts and other agencies that support essential services such as housing, schools and hospitals would be exempt from the tax.

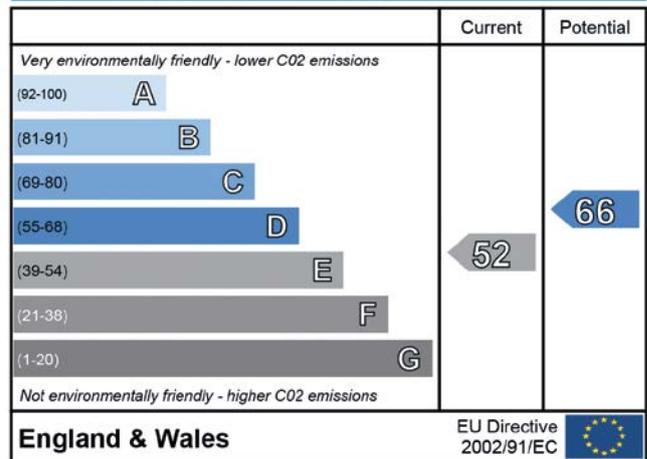
We also recognise the economic and cultural importance of Scotland’s agricultural sector. In assessing those larger farms that may be eligible for a carbon tax, it will be necessary to avoid unintended consequences, such as replicating the experience of the industrial sector, in which carbon production was effectively exported to other parts of the world. It would be counter-productive, for example, to increase imports of beef from countries whose agricultural practices are extremely damaging at the expense of high-quality Scottish beef.

It should also be noted that at least 93 per cent of farms in Scotland fall under the 1,000ha threshold and would therefore be exempt from taxation under our proposal.

Based on hectareage, every landowner would be assessed for actual and potential carbon emissions, sequestration and storage by relevant public agencies, local authorities, and expert consultants (along similar lines to the scheme used to rate the environmental impact of domestic properties, as depicted in the graph above).

They would then be placed in a graduated natural land carbon tax banding scheme collected and administered by local authorities, building upon existing systems for collecting non-domestic rates for sports shooting (which currently varies from £2 to £5 per hectare depending on land type) and other land-based businesses. The scheme would focus solely on natural carbon removal and storage. We recognise the role of renewables in replacing fossil fuels, but electricity-generating

Environmental Impact Rating



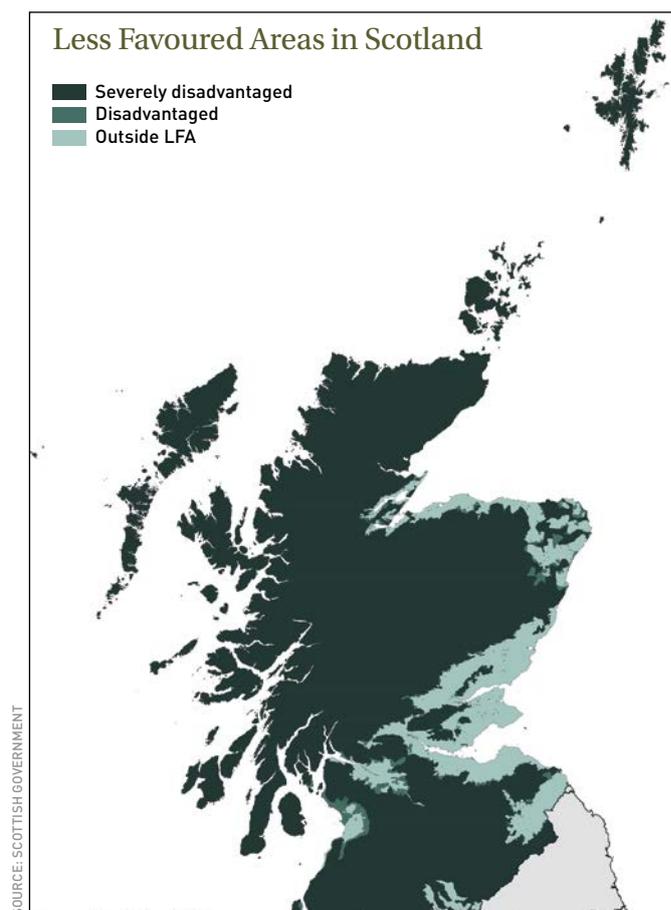
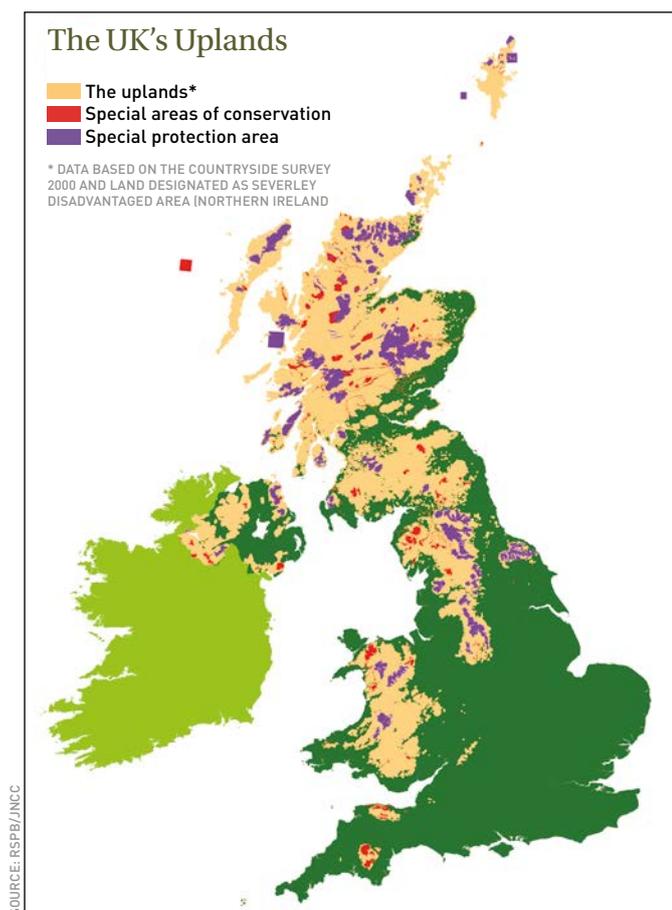
schemes are covered by existing incentives and regulation.

Based on 2014 figures published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre on private landholdings exceeding 1,000ha, we estimate that upwards of 39,000 sq. km of private land – half our total land area – would be assessed for natural carbon storage. Together with an additional 12,000 sq. km owned by government agencies and NGOs, around 60 per cent of Scotland’s land would be liable for assessment.

Until tax rates are set and carbon assessment of land is underway, it is difficult to forecast revenues with any precision. But with around 50,000 sq. km (or five million ha) meeting the minimum hectare threshold, and most of that land falling far short of its carbon capture potential, a notional average tax of £3 per hectare could theoretically raise up to £15million per year.

We further propose that all tax revenues raised be paid into a dedicated carbon capture fund to provide additional funding streams to support woodland expansion and peatland restoration programmes to assist farmers, crofters and other small landholders to make the transition to net zero land use. Landowners eligible for the tax could move to lower tax bands by changing land use to maximise carbon sequestration.

Because of the complexities of measuring peatland emissions, and their potential for future carbon sequestration, we recognise



the challenges involved in devising a fair and robust banding scheme. Research is already well-advanced in Scotland with, for example, the evolving ECOSSE (Estimation of Carbon in Organic Soils – Sequestration and Emissions) model which simulates soil carbon and nitrogen dynamics in both mineral and organic soils based on climate, land use, land management and soil data.

The introduction of such a system would present a challenge to estates whose primary land management objective is currently sport shooting. Landowners who maintain unsustainably high deer densities to maximise the number of stags available for trophy hunting, and those who manage land for driven grouse shooting to the detriment of carbon capture, would be taxed at the high end of the scale. A natural carbon land tax could become a major driver of change towards more responsible land management that contributes to climate and biodiversity targets.

PUBLIC BENEFITS

A transformation in our stewardship of the land along these lines would have other major spin-offs of local, national, and international significance. A crescendo of alarm bells is now ringing over another great global emergency: the loss of biodiversity at a rate unprecedented in human history. Ecological restoration across thousands of square kilometres of Scotland's uplands to combat climate change could also return an abundance of life to many of our landscapes. Expanding habitats would also allow species greater freedom to spread out of confined areas and more easily adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Restoring ecosystems to prioritise carbon storage could also help jump-start new forms of nature-based economic activity across many of our most fragile and sparsely populated areas, building upon the expansion of this sector between 2015 and

“Today, Scotland’s poorest quality agricultural land punches far below its weight when it comes to delivering public benefits, including climate change”

2019, when employment grew at five times the rate of the wider Scottish economy. There are already 195,000 nature-related jobs – more than in the entire construction industry and almost three times more than are

employed in the energy sector.

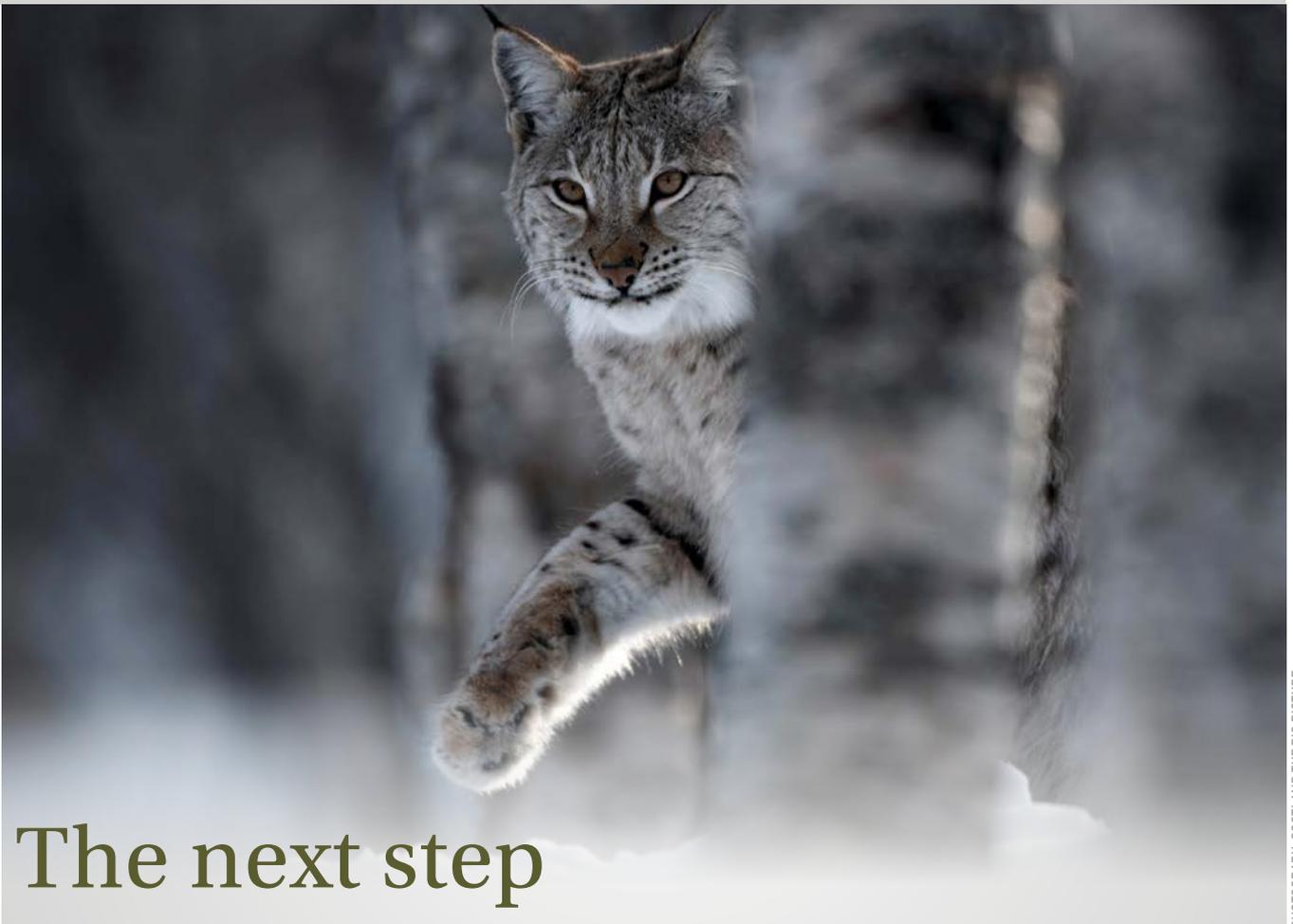
A recent report published by three wildlife charities (Scottish Wildlife Trust, RSPB and WWF) suggests that a major programme of restoring, protecting and expanding Scotland's peatlands and woodlands could create up to 3,500 direct jobs and a similar number of indirect jobs. Most of these new jobs would be located in some of Scotland's most sparsely populated areas, giving a boost to fragile local economies.

At the same time, transformed landscapes could over time help spread the benefits of tourism beyond our most famous beauty spots to other less favoured rural areas. And at national level, removing 13 MtCO₂e would be worth £390m a year to the Scottish economy at current EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) prices.

We believe that a collective effort to multiply the natural capital of our uplands, involving the Scottish Government, the Scottish Land Commission, Community Land Scotland, Forestry and Land Scotland, the Just Transition Commission, environmental NGOs and individual landowners, could bring new hope and optimism to rural Scotland, and drive forward the re-peopling of our glens. And last but not least, a bold programme of carbon capture underpinned by regulation and incentives could become an international showcase contributing to progressive global change in land use and management. □

More information

For further details, please contact Alan McCombes, the Trust's Public Affairs Adviser, alan.mccombes@johnmuirtrust.org



PHOTOGRAPH: SCOTLAND THE BIG PICTURE

The next step

A trio of conservation organisations – SCOTLAND: The Big Picture, Trees for Life and Vincent Wildlife Trust – have launched a year-long study to gauge public attitudes towards reintroducing the Eurasian lynx to the Scottish Highlands. **Mike Daniels** offers his thoughts

CARNIVORES are controversial. To us, at least. In the natural world, carnivores are part and parcel of the eternal struggle for survival and the evolutionary arms race between predator and prey. But, to us, carnivores are too much like competition and as such are at the centre of ‘human-wildlife conflict’ the world over.

But this conflict is pretty one sided, with the vast majority of casualties on the carnivore side. The fear that ranchers, sheep farmers and livestock herders have when it comes to predators is almost globally universal – and in most nations informs the received wisdom of politicians, policy makers and the public alike.

However, there is another view – one that says as well as persecuting and eliminating carnivores we also have an opportunity to bring them back. To rebuild what we have destroyed. To share our country with species that have, in evolutionary history terms, a greater claim to be here than we do.

In recent years, the UK has been pretty good at doing just that. Red kites and

white-tailed eagles have been brought back to our shores to soar the skies once again. Pine martens and golden eagles have been moved around the country to re-colonise their former ranges in Wales and the Scottish Borders respectively. Is the lynx next on the horizon?

Recent publicity around several re-introduction proposals for lynx have met with intense media interest and predictably polarised views. Those in favour have focused on the positive ecological benefits and the potential economic boost to the tourism industry. Those against have highlighted the impact on sheep and associated rural jobs.

So, what does the John Muir Trust think? As a wild places and wild nature charity, we recognise that ecological restoration of our wild land ultimately includes the restoration of natural processes, including keystone carnivores. As an organisation that works closely with rural communities and wider society, we also recognise that public consent is essential before any reintroductions take

place. Regardless of their merits, without public support any reintroduction will be doomed to acrimony and failure.

In fact, the reintroduction proposals currently underway are entirely consultation exercises. They are aimed at gauging what people really think about a hypothetical lynx reintroduction. It’s an opportunity for people in specific geographic areas, those from different land management sectors, plus people from urban, semi-urban and rural communities to express their views.

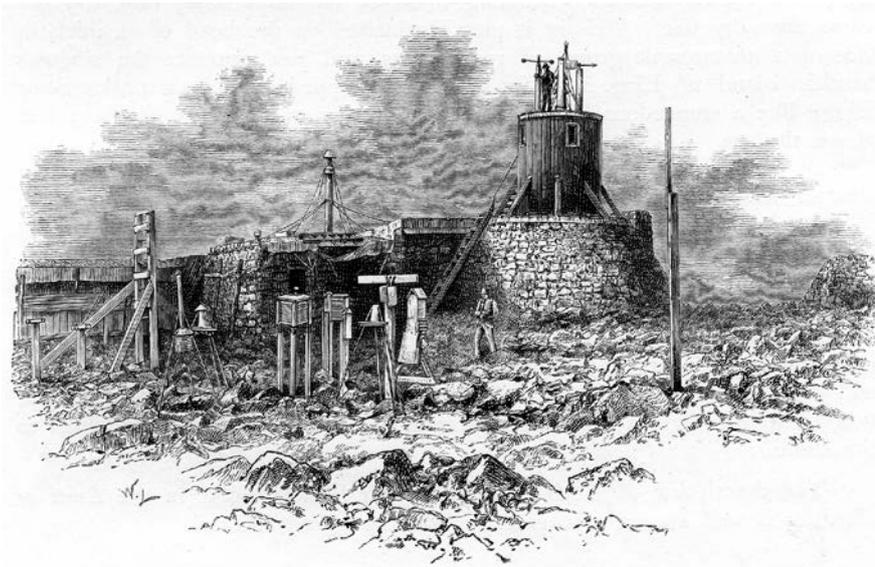
Although the Trust is not directly involved in this initiative, we fully support the approach. We recognise that people are key. It is people who removed lynx and it is people who can bring them back. So, as a first step, we need to find out what people truly think, what they know, what they fear and what they would like to see happen.

Trust members will likely have a range of views on whether it is right to bring lynx back to our wild places at all and, if so, when and how. What we can probably all agree upon though is that extensive consultation with local communities, land managers and wider society is a valid starting point. □

About the author
Mike Daniels is the Trust’s Head of Policy & Land Management

A storied mountain

From giants to geologists, guides and climbers, **Mick Tighe** unravels some of the rich folklore and history associated with Ben Nevis – a mountain that has now been in the Trust's care for 21 years



DRAWING: SMHC.CO.UK

THEY called her Cailleach Bheur, blue-faced daughter of a pale winter sun – a wild hag with hair of bramble and aspen twigs matted with ice and hoar frost. A dun-coloured shawl fashioned from hides of wolves, deer and mountain hare was pulled tight around her scrawny shoulders with a semmet (vest) of matted hair swooping down to a pair of buskins to cover her bony toes. A wand, some say a hammer, in her right hand, smote the lands roundabout Nevis come autumn time when she appeared from her stone-cold lair to lay waste the fertile ground until the Beltane fires of spring returned warmth to the land and chased the wizened crone back into the eternal snows for another year.

And then there was old Ben himself, born of the nearby volcano family we hear, mother earth spewing forth molten lava from the womb of creation to leave him standing proud among his fuming neighbours. The glaciers came and cooled him a little, rounded his character and sculptured his features along with wind and water. Ben and the old woman lived in harmony for a few millennia until humans came along.

GUIDING LIGHTS

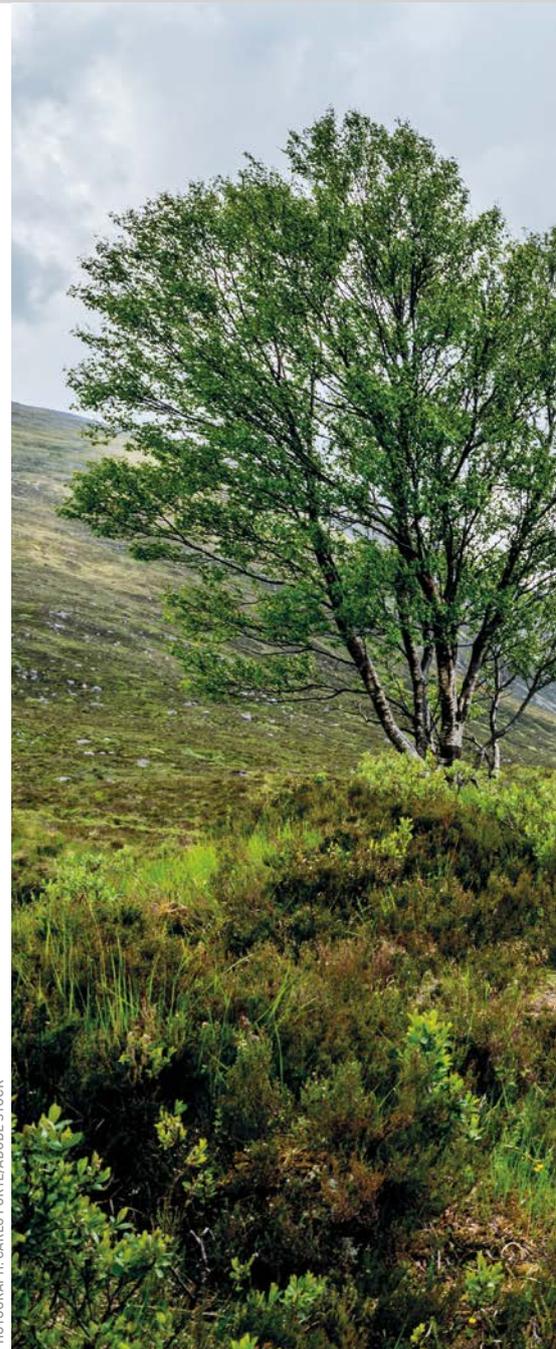
We'll never know for sure who first ascended Ben Nevis, though the first recorded ascents began in the mid-1700s. Almost universally they were accounts from wealthy travellers, scientists in search of mountain flora and fauna,

geologists hunting minerals, explorers wishing to fill a chapter in their travelogues, or poets such as John Keats who, in 1818, mused on the summit and composed a sonnet.

One of the geologists who visited during a tour of the Highlands and Islands in the 1820s was John McCulloch. He reached the summit successfully but, as he recorded later, during a ramble around its plateau "there came on us as dense and bitter storm of snow as I have ever experienced. I was not however alone since I had with me what is commonly called a guide, a lad who had volunteered his services. I had gained too much experience in guides not to know that they were, generally, either useless or mischievous ... when my guide found himself in a whirlwind of fog and snow, he began to cry the unhappy animal ... vowed that if he ever lived to get home, he would never guide another gentleman again, he would even surrender his five shillings if I would show him the way down the hill".

McCulloch did show him the way down, using his compass to do so, by which time the wee boy's "kilt was thoroughly cooled".

Unsurprisingly, as they were the local clan, it was mostly Cameron men who became Ben Nevis guides, with most ascents rather less dramatic than McCulloch's. The tradition of guiding continues to this day, although guides now tend to be recruited more for climbs on the Ben's north face than for ascents via the main path to the summit.



PHOTOGRAPH: CARLO FORTE/DOBBERSTOCK

Though not a guide as such, a man who knew his way up the Ben better than most was Clement Wragge who, together with his dog Renzo, ascended to the summit every day during the summers of 1881 and 1882 to take weather readings. His wife took similar readings at sea level for comparison.

Wragge, who earned the nickname 'In-Clement', worked for the Scottish Meteorological Society with one legacy of his exertions being the building, in 1883, of a summit observatory that took continuous weather recordings for the next 21 years.

MOUNTAIN MEN

The increase in visitors to the Ben brought with it the inevitability of accidents. One of the first to hit the headlines was when



The summit observatory, drawn circa 1910 (far left); path to the north face of Ben Nevis (main)

the Duchess of Buccleuch and her retinue got lost in mist during an ascent in 1838. Long John McDonald owned the distillery at the foot of Nevis where he distilled his famous Long John Dew of Ben Nevis. A man of many parts, John was probably the first rescue team leader and, upon receiving word that the Duchess was missing, he set off with a large bell which he rang to attract the party's attention; it worked, and the Duchess was brought down on horseback using Long John's plaid in lieu of a saddle. History does not record how much dew of Ben Nevis was consumed as a result.

The rescues continued, initially led by men like Long John, local shepherds and members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. A Minister in the Church of Scotland in Fort William in 1946, Bob Clarke was

perhaps the first person to get a formalised rescue team off the ground. Lochaber Mountaineering Club then became the main rescue team, with assistance from the police and RAF rescue teams.

It was not until 1969, however, that the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team was formally created. Today, the team deals with around 80 rescues a year in the area, around half of which are on Ben Nevis. On average, five people die on the Ben each year, mostly while attempting climbs on the sheer north face – routes that have become part of climbing legend.

The Scottish Mountaineering Club was formed in 1889 by a somewhat austere bunch of gentlemen, mostly from the upper echelons of Scottish society. This was the golden age of mountaineering when new climbs were being pioneered at

home and abroad though, surprisingly perhaps, most English mountaineers still went to the Alps leaving the Scottish contingent *carte blanche*.

Occasional forays from the south did not go down well and when Norman Collie and his pals succeeded in climbing Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis before the Scots, they were not amused. William Naismith, a stalwart of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, wrote to his good friend William Douglas: "My Dear Douglas ... the Sassenachs have indeed taken the wind out of our sails maist notoriously I wull say that. However, I suppose we must make a virtue of necessity and try to look pleasant about it, these beggars were more wide awake than us in skimming the cream off Glencoe and Ben Nevis."



PHOTOGRAPH: MICK TIGHE

Nevis highs (clockwise from main): ski touring; a dramatic descent; the author rescues Jason the dog, Stob Bhan



PHOTOGRAPH: MICK TIGHE



PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX GILLESPIE

Naismith went on to proclaim that Collie was a Scot, which he wasn't, but had this to say about the other members of the party, "... his three pals tho all very nice chaps are undoubted undiluted specimens of the genus pock-puddin' ... Flodden or even Culloden was nothing to this"

The subsequent exploration of Nevis has continued to this day with a glittering array of climbs in both summer and winter. They include one of the most famed ice climbs in the world, Point Five Gully, first climbed by JM Alexander, I Clough, D Pipes and R Shaw in 1959. Unfortunately, Clough was of the 'genus pock-puddin'' and was subsequently blackballed from joining the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

CHANGING OWNERSHIP

The ownership of Ben Nevis pictures like a tapestry of time interwoven with the thread of internecine warfare, clan battles, litigation, speculation, hydro-electricity and pleasure.

In the earliest accounts, Ben Nevis itself gets little mention, with the Lands of Lochaber and similar phrases more common. This was simply because the Ben itself was of no commercial value whereas the lands round about it were;

"The ownership of Ben Nevis pictures like a tapestry of time interwoven with the thread of internecine warfare, clan battles, litigation, speculation, hydro-electricity and pleasure"

the owners of old wanted men to fight their wars, crops to feed them and rents from the houses in which they lived; they wanted places to hunt and fish and, when times were hard, they wanted land to sell. It was only in the 20th century that water from Ben Nevis became a source of revenue other than through fishing.

When an Act of Parliament passed the Lochaber Water Power Scheme in 1921, it enabled the British Aluminium Company to purchase large amounts of land around Ben Nevis to use its waters for the production of hydro-electricity – a crucial component in the conversion of bauxite into aluminium.

There then began disagreement between the various landowners which resulted in, among many other transactions, the lower part of Ben Nevis coming under the ownership of the aluminium company. It's a situation that

remains today, albeit with new landlords.

In 2000, a branch of the Cameron family, somewhat unusually known as Fairfax-Lucy, decided to sell its holding to the John Muir Trust. The purchase marked one of the most remarkable moments in the Ben's history, as it was the first time it had been acquired for conservation purposes rather than for any financial gain. It was now, the upper part at least, separate from the 'commercial' land around it.

Together with the Nevis Landscape Partnership, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the local council and various other bodies, the Trust has since pumped large amounts of money into footpath repairs, regeneration schemes, environmental improvements, user management, study groups, rangers and much more.

Who knows what the future will bring? Though we can rest assured the old Ben himself and his Cailleach will maybe sleep a little easier now they are not the subjects of war and attrition. □

About the author

A former professional mountain guide, Mick Tighe spent 30 years in the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team. He is also founder of The Scottish Mountain Heritage Collection, smhc.co.uk

Coming of age

This year's summer solstice marks 21 years since the Trust began caring for Ben Nevis. It's been a busy couple of decades, explains **Nathan Berrie**

SINCE Duncan Fairfax-Lucy handed over the title deeds of the Ben Nevis Estate on 21 June 2000, the Trust has worked tirelessly to care for this special place. In the early days, the activity was largely administrative but since the establishment of the Nevis land team in 2006 the work has accelerated considerably.

One of the Trust's main aims is to enable opportunities for people of all backgrounds to connect with nature. It's an objective that the Nevis land team has fully embraced, with a whirlwind of engagement opportunities over the years, not least the volunteer work party programme. Since it began, more than 1,000 days of volunteer time have helped keep the paths around Ben Nevis and Glen Nevis maintained and litter free.

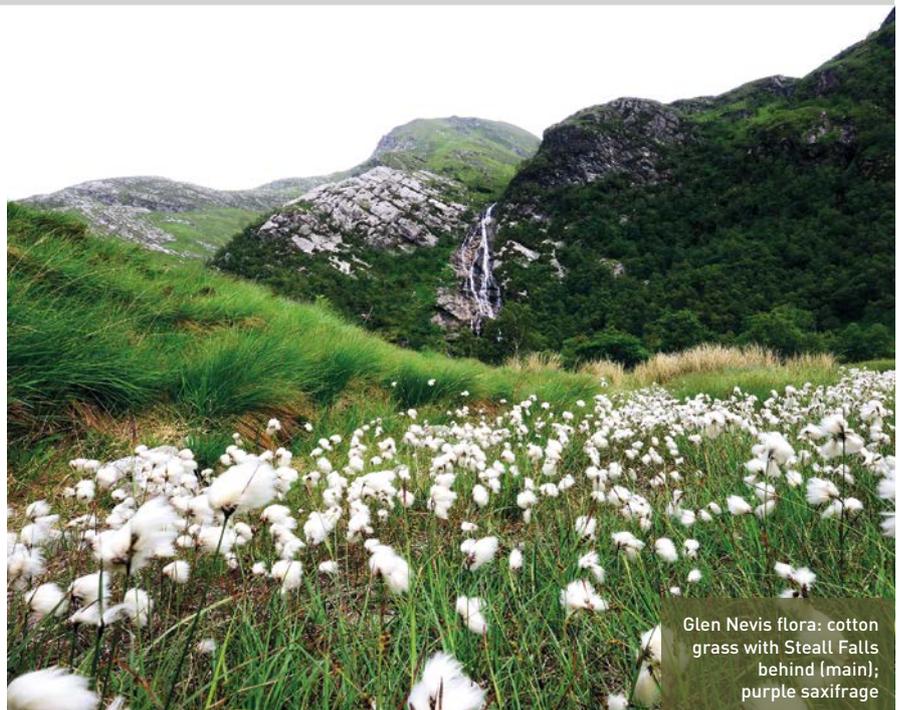
As well as volunteering, the team has created opportunities for young people to engage with nature through outdoor events and an annual wild poetry competition that has seen around 4,000 entries from more than 20 schools throughout Lochaber.

This year also marks another exciting engagement initiative for young people with the launch of our Nevis Junior Rangers programme that will create opportunities for the next generation of conservationists to learn more about our work.

One thing is certain: the Ben is as popular as ever. A record 160,000 visits were recorded in 2018, with almost 1.2 million in total since 2010. While such numbers have created challenges, our close relationship with the Nevis Landscape Partnership has enabled us to work meaningfully with landowners and stakeholders in Glen Nevis to encourage responsible access and achieve collective goals.

One project, working alongside Ordnance Survey, resulted in a historic revision to the record books, with Ben Nevis found to be a metre higher (1,345m) than first thought!

Biodiversity is another key focus at Nevis. For the past decade and more, the team has undertaken annual monitoring



Glen Nevis flora: cotton grass with Steall Falls behind (main); purple saxifrage



PHOTOGRAPHS: ALEX GILLESPIE

“More than a 1,000 days of volunteer time have helped keep the paths around Ben Nevis and Glen Nevis maintained and litter free”

of a whole range of species – from butterflies to birds, bats and water voles – as well as increase its understanding of how browsing animals influence habitat quality.

DEER MANAGEMENT

We have actively managed deer populations in a bid to encourage natural regeneration of areas of ancient native woodland around Steall. Although we have seen a year-on-year increase in

seedling height, a step change in deer management is needed if we are to achieve the kind of transformative change we would like to see in terms of the spread and extent of native woodland cover.

As such, and since the start of the year, we have significantly increased the annual cull to further reduce browsing pressure on the woodlands and maximise the carbon storage potential of the land.

We are also exploring greater community involvement in our deer management. Much like the old Highland land ethic *tuath*, we believe everyone should have access to the land, not just for recreation but also to gather venison for the pot. In future, we plan to increase these opportunities for any community member who wishes to be involved in deer management.

Overall, our vision for the Nevis area is for it to be recognised as a world-class visitor destination, complete with a restored natural tree line and wildlife-rich native woodland. To that end, we are working closely with the Nevis Landscape Partnership to improve interpretation and infrastructure and to create a base in the glen which will act as a focal point for visitor engagement.

And over the next 21 years and beyond, we will continue our work to future-proof the area from the threats of climate change, biodiversity breakdown and the pressures of increased tourism. In doing so, we hope to lead by example and create further opportunities for the community to participate in caring for a mountain that is such a vital asset for both the local and national economy. □

About the author
Nathan Berrie is the Trust's Nevis Conservation Officer

Frontline realities

Cecilie Dohm reflects on the Trust's recent visitor management research and the experience of interviewing rural communities about the impacts of increasing visitor pressures



PHOTOGRAPHS: CARRIE WEAGER



“THIS year has been the worst I have ever seen. It made me want to shut down, move away and never come back. If the current trend continues, it will destroy my business and my home, and I don't want to see that.” I remember standing opposite Sarah-Ann MacLeod, owner of the Shore Caravan Site in Achmelvich, as she said this to me. I recall the fierce look in her eyes, the frustration in her voice and the heartfelt stretch of silence that followed. I am usually quite a confident interviewer, but for once I didn't know what to say.

There have been plenty of lurid headlines about negative tourism impacts, but Sarah-Ann's words struck a real chord. It is one thing to read about overflowing bins, increased traffic and anti-social behaviour, but something else entirely to hear about the problems from the people who have to live with them.

It was a sobering moment on a trip that I had been so eager to undertake. After spending more than five months cooped up in a small tenement flat in Edinburgh, the prospect of travelling to Trust properties across the Highlands and Islands was, by far, the single most exciting thing my lockdown-dazed mind could imagine. The aim was to help the Trust gain a much better understanding of the practical problems caused by growing visitor pressures – a policy priority identified even before the post-lockdown 'wave' in summer 2020 – by speaking with people from communities living on and around land in the Trust's care.

So, it was with an almost euphoric enthusiasm that I set out on a three-week research trip in October 2020 that would involve 39 in-depth interviews with community representatives from the Isle of Skye, Lewis, Harris, Assynt, Northwest Sutherland, Lochaber and Highland Perthshire.

But as delighted as I was to escape city life, I was soon faced with a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, the frustration, anger, and despair that I witnessed again and again among the interviewees had a profound effect on me, yet on the other hand I deeply empathised with all the people who rushed to the hills and glens, desperate to escape the city. I was, after all, one of them.

STRUGGLING COMMUNITIES

Tourism is of course an important, and growing, part of many rural economies in Scotland. It's a sector that supports over 200,000 jobs and contributes more than £7 billion to the national economy. The promotion of Scotland's rugged and remote corners by VisitScotland and other tourism organisations, plus area-specific initiatives such as the North Coast 500 (NC500), has been hugely successful when measured in economic terms. But it has not always come without a cost.

From the Trust perspective, visitor numbers have increased at several of our properties. In 2018, Ben Nevis saw 160,000 annual visitors, up from 120,000 in 2013. “The area is certainly becoming more and more popular, and in many ways that's very positive,” commented Rob Cochrane, Seasonal Ranger at Nevis Landscape Partnership.

“It brings money into the local economy and raises the profile of the area, which is great, but the physical volume of visitors is starting to exceed the infrastructure – from the capacity of the road network to the footfall on paths, the amount of litter and the need for guided walks. Across the board, capacity has been reached and exceeded.”

Notably, 97 per cent of interview participants confirmed that



Bursting point (clockwise from left): Cecilie Dohm (right) with Sarah-Ann MacLeod; car parking and bins at Blairmore, by Sandwood Bay

they had experienced visitor pressures. They explained that rural communities face widespread problems, from littering, human waste and congestion on local roads to inappropriate ‘wild’ camping and parking in passing places and other non-designated sites.

They also reported negative environmental impacts, with campfires and the associated cutting down of trees on the rise. Overall, they said, a growing number of visitors have a distinct lack of awareness of the ‘leave no trace’ principle that is enshrined in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

“We do come across completely abandoned campsites, where tents, chairs, mattresses, sleeping bags, you name it, everything has just been left behind,” commented Stephen Roworth, Conservation Officer at Loch Rannoch Conservation Association.

For others, it’s a question of numbers. “We have had campervans parked in laybys up here for probably the last 30 years,” noted Sylvia MacKay, General Manager of the Old School Restaurant in Kinlochbervie. “If there are a few people doing these things then that’s okay, but now there are five campervans parked in every single layby, every single night.

“If one person surreptitiously parks on the machair or has a fire on the beach and cleans it up, it’s not a problem, but when there are 10 people doing it every single night, it becomes disruptive.”

Similarly, 82 per cent of interviewees stated that they had noticed a change in the type of visitors to their areas. “In general, a lot of people in the community feel that we are getting more ignorant tourists,” noted Michael Hunter, Manager of the North Harris Trust. “Ignorant in terms of where they are, who they are visiting, how they are supposed to behave, what their responsibilities are and what they can and cannot do.”



Several interviewees also reported a rise in anti-social visitor behaviour, with communities along the NC500 route particularly hard hit. Back at the Shore Caravan Site in Achmelvich, Sarah-Ann MacLeod explained how locals and members of her staff have been verbally abused when trying to talk to visitors about problematic behaviour.

“We have had cases of people leaving rubbish in local residents’ mailboxes, or people trying to bury their rubbish in the dunes,”

she said. “There is toilet paper and wet wipes everywhere. People at my campsite were avoiding the beach, as were local people – nobody wanted to go down there. It’s really disheartening to see, but there is just no way for us to stop it.”

TICK-BOX TOURISM

While rural communities recognise the need to support tourism initiatives, local residents in particularly popular places often end up feeling under siege. Pinning down the source(s) of the escalating popularity is no easy task, but several of the interviewees pointed to the influence of specific marketing initiatives and social media. There is a feeling that the emphasis on ‘top 10’ and ‘must-see’ sites and the widespread use of hashtags on social media platforms contribute to a kind of tick-box tourism that only serves to ramp up the pressures at promoted places.

The NC500 is a case in point. “People have been sold this amazing road trip through what they are told is a wild, untouched, almost uninhabited landscape, and for a lot of people that is all they see,” noted Chris Rix, owner of Inchnadamph Lodge and B&B in Assynt. “Some people think that the entire stretch of the NC500 is a whole new road that has been created just for tourists.

“They don’t know the names of the villages they drive through; they are on a whistle-stop tour to get their bucket-list photos, and now people are hitting hotspots like Ardvreck Castle or the Inchnadamph Bone Caves in mass numbers, because social media directs them to particular places. If things continue like this, the great danger is that we just become a backdrop for a generation of Instagram selfies.”

Simultaneously, visitors are spending less time in local areas. “We used to get people who would come up every year and stay for around a week, but more and more people are only staying for one-night stopovers,” commented Andy Summers, Senior Ranger at High Life Highland. “My guided walks are not so popular anymore because now that people are doing the NC500, they are just driving from A to B and don’t have any time to stay and explore. If they come to Clachtoll, they get out of the car, take a photo of the beach and then drive on.”

Others feel that visitors don’t have the same connection to the area and the people that they perhaps used to. “There is very little regard or appreciation for the communities who live up here, it’s all about the scenery,” said Helen O’Keefe, a crofter and owner of the Elphin Tea Rooms in Assynt. “It’s a much faster kind of tourism, which makes it less pleasant to deal with.”

TIME FOR ACTION

With local authorities having to save money due to tightened budgets in recent years, many rural communities have witnessed a reduction in essential facilities such as public toilets, bin collections and countryside ranger services. These cuts have contributed significantly to current issues – 90 per cent of interview participants pointed to an acute lack of public funding – and there is real concern that the absence of adequate infrastructure will damage local areas and detract from the very things that bring people to the Highlands and Islands in the first place.

Following representations to policy makers and political parties, the Trust welcomed the Scottish Government’s pledge in its draft budget for 2021-2022 to double the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund from £3 million to £6 million. This will help ease some of the visitor pressures by addressing capital costs, but funding for infrastructure is not the only solution. There is also a need to tackle anti-social behaviour through education, as well as expand and prioritise information about responsible access, invest in countryside ranger services and find ways to redistribute visitor numbers beyond the usual tourist honey pots.

Interviewees also stressed the importance of advocating ‘slow tourism’ – a different form of tourism that involves travelling for



PHOTOGRAPH: NATHAN BERRIE



“There is very little regard or appreciation for the communities that live up here, it’s all about the scenery”

Helen O’Keefe



PHOTOGRAPHS: CARRIE WEAVER

Left behind: abandoned campfire, Glen Nevis (top); discarded face mask and buried litter

a longer period of time at a slower pace, resulting in a deeper, more authentic cultural experience.

Overall, it is clear that we need to take urgent action to reduce visitor pressures on rural communities and the natural environment. As we prepare for the gradual reopening of society later in the year, Scotland’s environment will again have an important part to play in our recovery.

By investing in appropriate infrastructure, education, and long-term planning, we can enable positive benefits for rural communities and local economies, while ensuring that everyone can connect responsibly with wild places and the natural environment. □

Further information

The Trust’s full report, *Frontline realities: Rural communities and visitor pressures*, includes a variety of recommendations and actions for the Scottish Government, tourism bodies, local communities and the Trust itself. Read it at johnmuirtrust.org/visitor-report

About the author

Cecilie Dohm is the Trust’s Policy Officer

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Answering the call

Against the backdrop of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, **Ali Wright** explores the Trust's response to the joint climate emergency and biodiversity crisis

NEWSPAPER headlines from the last few years read like an extended obituary to life on Earth: an average decline of almost 70 per cent in the population sizes of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles since 1970; one million species facing extinction globally; and 15 per cent of species headed for extinction in the UK. Each statistic speaks of a natural world broken and picked apart, the dropped stitches woven into a tapestry of ominous predictions. Scientists now warn of an acceleration towards the sixth mass extinction on Earth. And as was pointed out in David Attenborough's recent *Extinction: The Facts* programme, this time it is humans who are the asteroid.

This summer the UN launches its Decade on Ecosystem Restoration – a global effort to halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide. In the UK, observers could be forgiven for raising a sceptical eyebrow given that we have failed on 17 out of 20 biodiversity measures outlined in the 2010 UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

There are signs, however, of a growing awareness of the scale and urgency of the problem, with government and decision-makers now charged with a meaningful response. Given how humanity relies on biodiversity for its health and wellbeing, the need for transformative change has never been greater.

"I think the mood has changed," says Liz Auty, the Trust's East Schiehallion Manager. "Young people, in particular, want to know what conservationists and others are doing about not just climate change but also biodiversity loss."

Crucially, the conversation has begun to embrace the role that healthy ecosystems play in mitigating the impacts of a changing climate. The joint climate emergency and biodiversity crisis that the Scottish Government declared in 2020 are two sides of the



PHOTOGRAPH: SHAUN ROBERTSON/2020VISION

same coin; help nature and it helps the fight against climate change. Healthy peatland, wetland and woodland not only creates habitat for a range of species, but also locks up vast amounts of carbon and provides greater resilience to a changing climate.

WARNING SIGNS

There is certainly much to do. At coastal sites such as Sandwood and on Skye, the Trust has witnessed at first hand some of the damage done at ecosystem level.

"There has already been a drastic decline in nesting seabirds which are a key indicator of the health of marine ecosystems," notes Mike Daniels, the Trust's Head of Policy and Land

Management. "This in itself is due to a huge decline in fish stocks, partly from over-fishing and partly because of ocean acidification."

Back on dry land, the absence of natural predators combined with record numbers of deer across Scotland remain the main challenges for large scale restoration of native woodlands and biodiversity. "We don't have functioning ecosystems because there are no predators, so we have to intervene all the time," notes Liz at Schiehallion. "But how long do we continue doing that?"

More than 40 per cent of land in the Scottish Highlands and Islands is given over primarily to 'sporting' estates – a relic from Victorian days. Deer are, of



Fulmar fall: seabird numbers have declined drastically at Sandwood (main); monitoring work, Schiehallion



PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

be seen. The actions agreed at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow later this year will be telling.

“While Covid-19 has been the wave crashing on the shore, climate change and biodiversity loss is the massive tsunami that’s rolling in from the deep,” warns Mike. “We have to wake up and act, but we’re still hamstrung by our old focus on consuming finite resources and the importance of GDP.”

FRESH HOPE

In amongst the gloom there are, of course, examples of genuine progress to be celebrated throughout Britain: the return of beavers and their river restoration abilities; projects such as the rewilding of the Knepp Estate in Sussex; and natural woodland regeneration at Mar Lodge in the Cairngorms – which highlights what is possible when deer numbers are managed at sustainable levels.

“We are seeing more community groups turning towards the same goals of nature protection and restoration – public opinion seems to be moving that way,” notes Cathryn Baillie, the Trust’s Conservation Ranger on Skye.

Around the UK, there has been an almost 50 per cent increase in the amount of time volunteers give to nature in the last 20 years. Around one in 10 people are now members of or are involved in an environmental organisation. That’s a significant voice.

With the protection of biodiversity and restoration of natural processes at the core of its work since the very beginning, the Trust continues to channel this growing energy to help make positive changes on areas of land in its care.

On Skye, work on restoring 330

course, a natural part of the landscape, but historically they would have existed in woodland in sustainable numbers, not the million-plus grazing mouths that prevent natural regeneration today.

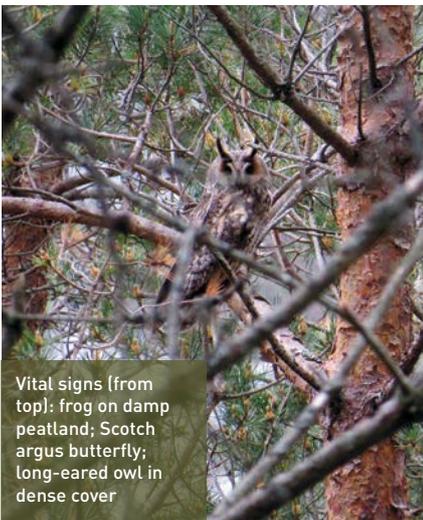
There are other land uses that will also need to change if climate and biodiversity targets are to be met: grouse moors that are managed for a single species at the expense of many others; some farming practices that contribute to the pollution of waterways and the loss of invertebrate populations; and commercial forestry that still has some way to go before incorporating a healthier mix of native woodland, with all the biodiversity benefits that would bring.

“Without wholesale changes in land

management at a national level through government policies and subsidies, we simply cannot achieve our ambitions for climate change and biodiversity,” comments Alan McCombes, the Trust’s Public Affairs Adviser.

Of course, this past year has seen many nations around the world put free market ideology to one side as they attempt to chart a path through the Covid-19 pandemic. When a crisis is upon us, it shows what can be achieved – with the development and subsequent roll-out of vaccines particularly remarkable.

Whether this response to an acute public health crisis sets a precedent for meaningful progress around climate change and biodiversity loss remains to



PHOTOGRAPHS: LIZ AUTY

Vital signs (from top): frog on damp peatland; Scotch argus butterfly; long-eared owl in dense cover



PHOTOGRAPH: LIZ AUTY

hectares of native woodland at Strathaird continues alongside the removal of 1,700 hectares of Sitka spruce from fragile peatland and restoring the blanket bog.

At Glenlude in the Borders, the Trust is removing non-native trees to allow nature to find its own balance in the face of a changing climate. “We learn a lot just by trying – seeing what works, what doesn’t – and letting nature do its thing,” explains Karen Purvis, the Trust’s Glenlude Manager.

Elsewhere, and inspired by studies of similar landscapes in Norway, the Trust has plans to return natural mountain woodland to the slopes of Schiehallion. “We visited Norway in 2018 and saw what it can look like when you remove grazing

pressure and allow the land to regenerate,” explains Liz Auty. “Schiehallion is an ideal place to show what a mountain woodland can look like here in Scotland. Yes, there are constraints, but if we can do it here, we can show it’s possible anywhere.”

In 2018/19, all the Sitka spruce at Schiehallion was felled and replanted with native species to create eight hectares of new woodland, while a further 72 hectares have been fenced to allow natural regeneration.

And there are big changes too on the policy front. The Trust has unveiled radical proposals for a new carbon land tax (see page 10) that would see 60 per cent of Scotland’s land mass devoted to

carbon sequestration through the restoration of native woodland, wetland and peatland.

Meanwhile, the Scottish Government has just announced that it has accepted all of the substantial changes to management of deer recommended in a report by the independent Deer Working Group. The Scottish Government is also expected to introduce licensing for grouse moors within the next two years.

UK-wide, there is hope that, following Brexit, the removal of Common Agricultural Policy subsidies which have supported damaging land use practices for decades will bring much needed changes to the way that land is farmed. There are signs, too, that the new



Fresh start (clockwise from main): regenerating willow, Schiehallion; tree planting, common blue damselfly and adder (all Glenlude)



“For me, biodiversity is about noticing the little things – the joy of hearing the first curlew, or seeing an adder basking in the sunshine – and being able to share these moments with volunteers on the hills”
 Karen Purvis



PHOTOGRAPHS: KAREN PURVIS

Environmental Land Management Schemes currently being phased in will even include elements of rewilding.

PEOPLE AND PLACE

But what can get lost in policy and targets is this: the restoration of nature is about the rights of the many over the few. It’s about a liveable future, and the right for everybody to connect with nature.

The past year has shown what a future tech-based dystopia could look like – people atomised at home, communicating only on screen – and how nature has been vital to all who have been fortunate enough to access it.

A site like Glenlude places people and volunteers at the heart of its journey to

ecological restoration. “A biodiverse landscape does not mean that it excludes people,” says Karen. “Biodiversity can work side by side with engagement. For me, biodiversity is about noticing the little things – the joy of hearing the first curlew, or seeing an adder basking in the sunshine – and being able to share these moments with volunteers on the hill.”

Meanwhile, at Schiehallion, the work to create healthy areas of mountain woodland is already reaping rewards. “Every area of willow now has a willow warbler,” reports Liz. “When I walk through and all the patches have species like that, we’ve won.”

“The new woodland just feels different, as if the pressure has been lifted and the

land has been able to take a breath. Last summer, I was out walking on a warm day when hundreds of argus butterflies just lifted up around me. It was magical.”

It’s hard to imagine a better symbol of transformation. □

About the author
 Ali Wright is a freelance writer focusing on nature and sustainability



UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON
ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION
 2021-2030

Staying wild

Phil Stubbington explores how a variety of people associated with the Trust have stayed connected with the wild during this most challenging of years

CHANGE. Resilience. Being patient. Words and phrases that I am sure we have all heard many times over the past year. But these are also words that I associate with wild places – and the Trust’s work to protect wildness and inspire a connection with nature.

People and communities around the world have all had to adapt and, to some extent, grow over the last 12 months. And for those who love the outdoors, including the many who have discovered its power in more recent times, maintaining a connection with that world beyond our doors and windows has been vital.

Doing so has often involved making changes in home and work life – small actions that help nature, or that boost personal health and wellbeing. Others have planned for better times, looking ahead to future adventures; while, for some, simply reflecting on a connection to a wild place has provided calm and solace.

For me, it has been as simple as appreciating how fortunate I am to live in rural Llangollen, North Wales, with easy access to woods, rivers and the clean air of the nearby Berwyn mountains. I know many, close family included, who have not been so lucky.

Here, we discover how a variety of people from across the Trust’s supporter base have chosen to stay connected with their versions of wildness during the pandemic. Every experience has been different, but profound in its own way. And what is perhaps common to all is an understanding that absence from wildness makes the heart grow fonder. □

About the author
Phil Stubbington is the Trust’s
John Muir Award England
& Wales Manager

Wild Action Fund

Help us connect people with wild places and inspire positive action for nature. Your donation to the Trust’s new Wild Action Fund will help us create opportunities for more people to protect the natural environment, from our wildest landscapes to urban green spaces. johnmuirtrust.org/connect

Get involved! See how others have used the John Muir Award to support and frame their experiences, and plan your own, at johnmuiraward.org



PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIPPA MITCHELL

Walking for the future

This lockdown, my children (above) challenged themselves to raise funds for charity by walking 26 miles a week for 12 weeks. Every day we are out in the forest, fields and heathland of Surrey. As Jamie (aged 8) says: “I love playing in the woods, seeing animals and being in nature. Happiness fills me in the wild”. And Leila (aged 12) has also gained so much from the experience: “Walking alone with the dog is exciting and relaxing. I am more observant and have time to notice the little things. I have space to think and breathe.”

Philippa Mitchell, John Muir Award participant

Wellwoods and more

As our world has changed, we adapted to ensure continued access to outdoor play for our children. We recognised the urgent need to protect the children’s mental health, so launched our Wellwoods project to support this through outdoor play. The response has been overwhelming, with one parent reporting: “My son came home boosted and said he feels like his ‘normal self’ again.”

To reach more children we also developed the John Muir Challenge, supporting schools to embrace nature as

part of their remote learning through the John Muir Award. Each week, pupils are set a challenge to discover, explore and conserve wild spaces near their homes – reconnecting them with their local green spaces and encouraging responsible use. Pupils answer questions, take pictures and share their experiences with their teachers.

We have been blown away by the response, with over 4,000 children from 90 schools across the UK signed up. *Jackie Simpson, OutLET Play Resource, John Muir Award Provider*



PHOTOGRAPH: JACKIE SIMPSON



PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTINA RILEY

The beach today

During lockdown walks on the beach I found myself forming daily displays of found shells, pebbles, feathers and bone. The past year has shown that wildness is not the deep forests or mountain peaks but every form of life, every cell, fighting for its own survival beyond our control. In a way, this acted as a distraction from the wild and towards order; a tangible, controllable thing which all the while reveals in daily fragments how I fit into this wild world and the endless treasures that it holds.

Christina Riley, Trust Member



PHOTOGRAPH: CLARE DYSON

Making a difference

Connecting to the wild during lockdown has had its challenges. One thing I have done is work on enhancing a forest school area for children and wildlife. It's been a great project and makes me feel like I'm making a difference. Usually, I would be working with the kids but without them there I've had to just keep chipping away. Spending regular time on that gorgeous bit of land has made me feel much closer to it. 'Dwell time' is so important when it comes to nurturing my connection to the natural world.

Clare Dyson, Cottage Garden Company, John Muir Trust supporter

Running, but different

For me, Canicross is a social activity. Small groups of people, dogs attached, running the trails. But in the main, the pandemic has changed that. Running alone, just with my dog, is a sensory experience. I notice what she notices: squirrels in the trees above, the scents she tracks. The morning air, the freshness of the fields, the pull of my dog ... that is what has kept me connected with wildness.

Caroline Sanger-Davies, friend of the Trust



PHOTOGRAPH: CAROLINE SANGER-DAVIES



PHOTOGRAPH: EMMA TAYLOR

A world upside down

Covid-19 turned life upside down and ripped up routines. Much disappeared, yet two things remained: family and nature. The John Muir Award gave us the incentive to bring these together and work towards something. We incorporated new nature-related activities into our daily exercise allowance. A father and son were now out daily, exploring local woodlands and parks, hand in hand, learning about and looking for wildlife. I could see their connections strengthening with nature, and with each other. And now, they are closer than they have ever been.

Emma Taylor, Family John Muir Award participant



PHOTOGRAPH: BEN TAYLOR



PHOTOGRAPH: GILL MOON



PHOTOGRAPH: NEVIS ENSEMBLE/TOMMY GA-KEN WAN

Time to plan

With the gradual easing of restrictions, now is the time to plan your own Journey for Wildness – raising funds for the Trust along the way. **Julie Gough** highlights three people who have done exactly that

THE BIG ONE

BEN TAYLOR (top left) has dreamt about his mammoth Journey for Wildness for years and is itching to get started. He plans to walk the entire coastline of mainland UK, taking part in beach cleans and seaweed surveys along the way. “I wanted to raise awareness of the horrific extent of pollution around our beautiful coastline, and to show people that they can make a big difference to save the places they love,” he explains. Ben plans to start in Glasgow in early April and enjoy the west coast before the worst of the midges! He aims to reach Edinburgh in November in time for COP26, when he’ll head to Glasgow to volunteer and help raise awareness of environmental pollution and the climate emergency.

Keep an eye out for our updates and,

if nearby, join Ben on one of his coastal clean-ups. Ben is raising funds for the Marine Conservation Society as well as the Trust. uk.virginmoneygiving.com/BenTaylor89

A VISUAL JOURNEY

WHEN the first lockdown restricted her work as a professional photographer, Gill Moon (top middle), a Trust Member, began to record observations from her daily walks on Hollesley Marshes – an RSPB reserve on the Alde-Ore Estuary in Suffolk.

Her observations have now been published as a book – *Grounded, a year of nature connection on Hollesley Marshes* (see page 32) – the price of which includes a donation to the Trust.

Even without her camera, Gill sees the world through a photographer’s lens. It’s about the tiny details, such as how light strikes certain objects, different textures, patterns and shapes. “If you go out looking specifically for a certain thing, you’ll see it more,” says Gill. “Just go for a walk. Don’t wait.”

To encourage others to connect with nature through photography, and start their own Journey for Wildness, Gill is offering a series of mindfulness workshops at several locations in Suffolk. A £20 donation will be made to the Trust for every workshop attendee. For more details, visit gillmoon.com

500 MILES, 100 DAYS

SCOTLAND’S first ‘street orchestra’, the Nevis Ensemble aims to make orchestral music accessible to everyone by playing

on beaches, in parks and even on the summit of Ben Nevis! And for 100 days each year musicians take part in creative and practical activities to make a positive change for natural places.

For her #100DaysOfGreenNevis campaign this year, Nevis Ensemble trumpeter Elisabeth Lusche (top right) is walking and running 500 Miles in 100 days to raise money for the John Muir Trust and the Sierra Club.

“The Proclaimers’ *I’m Gonna Be* is one of our most popular tunes and is the inspiration for my journey,” she explains.

Living in the densely populated Netherlands, Elisabeth has struggled to find wild open spaces for her outings but there is a park nearby and the coast is also close, so she has been able to enjoy some varied routes each day.

“I really appreciate how important the local parks are, but they’re so small and it’s obvious how critical it is for us all to take responsibility for keeping them clean,” comments Elisabeth. “When I’m walking on the beach, I feel humbled and small, but I’m still conscious of my impact and feel inspired to be a good steward.”

To support Elisabeth visit her fundraising page justgiving.com/fundraising/elisabeth-lusche □

Further information

To create your own Journey for Wildness, visit johnmuirtrust.org/journeyforwildness

About the author

Julie Gough is the Trust’s Marketing and Communications Manager

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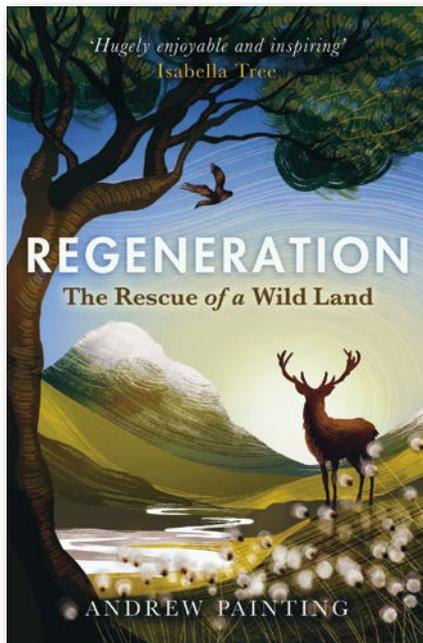
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Regeneration: The Rescue of a Wild Land, by Andrew Painting

Alan McCombes is absorbed by a stirring account of a land reborn

ROYAL Deeside is the spiritual home of the traditional Highland sporting estate. It was here that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert took up deer stalking in the mid-19th century, igniting a feverish passion for gun sports among Britain's upper classes that would prove to be more than just a fleeting craze.

Today, much of the landscape still bears the scars, literally and metaphorically, of generations of land management primarily for the purpose of delivering an abundance of stags and grouse. The soaring magnificence of this area camouflages the harsh reality of ecological impoverishment. This is beautiful desolation on a panoramic scale.

But times are changing. *Regeneration* is the engrossing story of one vast estate which has galloped off in a new direction. Mar Lodge has in recent years become known as one of the favourite locations for *Winter Watch*, the TV show hosted by Chris Packham and Michaela Strachan. Even 20 years ago, it would have been far more difficult to broadcast such a programme from this location in the depths of winter, not just for technical reasons but because of what was missing.

The 30,000ha estate included some of Europe's most spectacular landscapes, including 15 Munros and four of Scotland's five highest peaks. This sub-arctic expanse also contained dying remnants of the once expansive Caledonian forest. But for 200 years, the ancient pinewoods had been depleted almost to the point of extinction by vast herds of deer whose numbers had soared to levels not seen since the Ice Age. Natural regeneration had long since ceased, and the ravaged land lay still and silent.

Regeneration is the painfully honest but ultimately inspirational story of the transformation of Mar Lodge by a

dedicated team of ecologists, stalkers, rangers and other estate workers led, since 2002, by Shaila Rao of the National Trust for Scotland. It began seven years earlier when the conservation and heritage charity bought the estate from an American media billionaire who ran it primarily for sports shooting.

This is no tale of overnight success: along the way, there were numerous obstacles, conflicts, detours and false dawns. At the heart of all of these trials and tribulations was the old familiar impediment of high densities of red deer. In the early years, Shaila was in despair. "It was totally frustrating for me because you were setting up monitoring, providing information showing that the majority of seedlings were quite heavily damaged, but we weren't seeming to respond to that in terms of management. In the quadrats it could take an hour just to count the deer dung. I used to look up and see a group of deer sitting above me, watching me work."

After much soul-searching, and a more focused approach to deer management, which included low-impact fencing, targeted shooting in high-density deer hotspots, and out-of-season and night-time culling, progress began to accelerate. By 2016 the tide had turned. A survey that year found 835ha of regenerating woodland – and the Caledonian pinewood was on course to double in size.

Three years later, birch, rowan, willow and juniper were all thriving, once rare wildflowers were becoming commonplace and the woodlands were alive with bird song. In 2017, the estate was designated Scotland's biggest National Nature Reserve, and is today widely admired as a landscape-scale model of ecological restoration – and a glorious showcase of what could be possible across much of Scotland's upland areas.

Andrew Painting, an ecologist at Mar Lodge, is also an outstanding new nature writer – and someone we will no doubt hear more from in the years to come.

£20.00 birlinn.co.uk

About the reviewer
Alan McCombes is the Trust's
Public Affairs Advisor

Others we like

Grounded – a year of nature connection on Hollesley Marshes, Gill Moon

The work of Suffolk-based landscape photographer and Trust member, Gill Moon, *Grounded* documents a year in the life of Hollesley Marshes, where she walked every day with her dog during the first lockdown. Images portray fleeting moments captured during morning walks;



they were unplanned, mostly shot without a tripod or filters and represent the author's reaction to a scene at a particular moment in time. 100 copies of the book are available, priced £28, with Gill donating £10 to the Trust for each copy sold. gillmoon.com/projects/groundedbook

Braiding Sweetgrass, Robin Wall Kimmerer

Plant ecologist, storyteller and mother – Dr Kimmerer's uplifting book is full of beauty and metaphors that blend her scientific and indigenous knowledge of plants with her compassion for the natural world: "In a world of scarcity,

English Pastoral: An Inheritance, by James Rebanks

Ross Brannigan delights in a life-enhancing portrayal of farming alongside nature

PUBLISHED five years ago, James Rebanks' bestselling first book, *The Shepherd's Life*, revealed much about the gruelling life of a Cumbrian farmer, far removed from the chocolate box image of the Lake District.

But something struck me: there was not a single, detailed mention of nature, only livestock. One section stood out: an account of James delighting in killing crows with his grandfather. The anecdote ended as quickly as it came, with little reflection.

Today, Rebanks is celebrated for a very different approach to farming – one that is immediately apparent in the pages of his latest book, *English Pastoral*. While the opening chapter reflects on his childhood, as his first book did, the landscape is

richer; there are stars, meadows, lapwings and curlews. The farm, with its sheep and cows, sits within a wider mosaic of nature.

As the book progresses, Rebanks details the steady attrition of nature: how supermarkets pressure farmers to produce monocultures; the straightening of fields to increase efficiency; and the explosion in pesticide use to increase production.

At first, he is an advocate of progress, but soon notices a gradual decay. He travels to Iowa in the US and sees what his valley might become. "It is a landscape of big skies – and below, all is dark, flat and bleak," he writes. "It offers little but utility."

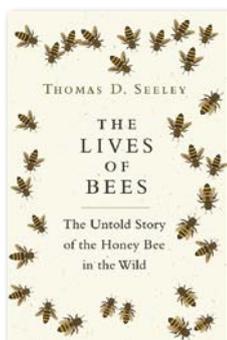
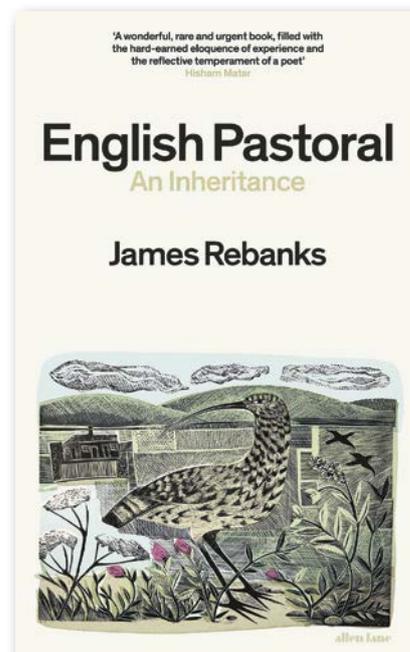
He returns from his travels with a fresh vision for his farm: one in which farming and nature thrive side by side. Today, as he plants his 12,000th sapling, expands areas of meadow and widens sections of river, Rebanks paints a vivid picture of how farming and nature can coexist.

£20.00

Allen Lane, an imprint of penguin.co.uk

About the reviewer

Ross Brannigan is the Trust's Engagement Officer



The Lives of Bees, The Untold story of the Honey Bee in the Wild, by Thomas D. Seeley

Stephen McCarthy discovers how wild honey bees offer vital lessons for saving the world's managed bee colonies

IT IS said that 95 per cent of the honey bees in the British Isles live in managed apiaries. My own experience as a beekeeper, and an observer of the natural world, would confirm this, but I don't

know of any scientific work on the topic of wild bees on these shores. Not so in the US, where Professor Thomas Seeley has studied wild honey bees in the forests of upstate New York since the 1970s.

Crucially, his studies span the periods both before and after the catastrophic arrival of varroa, a parasitic mite of bees that spread from Asia to the US in 1987 (and the UK in 1992). As such, he is able to highlight how the wild bees of Ithaca, New York, were as devastated as any other bee population, but recovered. The surviving bees live with varroa through "deploying a diverse set of behavioral resistance weapons". Here in the UK, beekeepers still tackle varroa through the use of chemicals that are no good for the bees either.

From a Trust perspective, the UK experience raises the question

of rewilding. Returning a wild insect to its natural environment – in the wild, bees live in forest environments – seems obvious, but the Trust has other qualifications for this job given the land in its care. Wild bees need forests, and the older the better as they nest in holes that form in older trees.

Given how, as the author details, wild bees generally keep themselves much better than us beekeepers do, I will now radically change my own beekeeping practice. But the big prize is still a way off. Rewilding will ultimately give us access to varroa resistant strains of bees. And the more wild bees there are that develop resistance, the bigger the resource for beekeepers to sip from and the less need there will be for chemical treatments.

£19.99

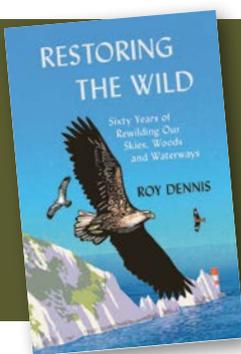
press.princeton.edu

About the reviewer

Stephen McCarthy is an Inverness-based beekeeper and Trust member. This is an extract from a longer review that is available on the Trust website

interconnection and mutual aid become critical for survival. So say the lichens." £9.99. penguin.co.uk

Walking Class Heroes: Pioneers of the Right to Roam, Roly Smith
A wonderful celebration of the hardened band of campaigners who fought for so long to give ramblers their cherished right to roam. Many were larger-than-life characters who were prepared to go to extreme lengths to reclaim the right of access removed by the hated Enclosure Acts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. £9.99. signalbooks.co.uk



Restoring the Wild: Sixty Years of Rewilding Our Skies, Woods and Waterways, Roy Dennis

One of the driving forces behind the UK's reintroduction agenda, Roy Dennis recounts a lifetime of stories from the absolute front line of conservation. The book takes readers from his first project to reintroduce sea eagles to Fair Isle in the 1960s to current work establishing them on the Isle of Wight – with plans for the translocation of 12 more juveniles this summer. In between are tales of red kites, ospreys, beavers, red squirrels and more. Remarkable stories from a remarkable figure. £18.99 William Collins, an imprint of harpercollins.co.uk

Andrew Cotter

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW COTTER



Andrew in his happy place together with Olive and Mabel

Sports broadcaster Andrew Cotter shot to fame during the first lockdown with his masterful commentary of his dogs, Olive and Mabel. He has since written a book about their adventures together and most recently donated his winnings from *Celebrity Mastermind* to the John Muir Trust. **Daisy Clark** finds out more

How did you get into sports broadcasting?

I fell into it like a lot of people fall into their jobs, because I had no clue what I wanted to do when I graduated. If you haven't got a clear idea of what you want to do and are just wandering around with a vague cloud of nonsense in your head, then the media is calling! I applied for a job with ScotFM, a local radio station, and it snowballed from there.

Any particular career highlights?

When starting out you don't think you'll be covering the opening ceremony at an Olympic Games on the BBC, or sitting in the Centre Court commentary box during the Wimbledon final. Commentating on the Six Nations, or The Masters, The Open ... when I reel them off, I realise how lucky I've been.

Tell us about writing your first book, *Olive, Mabel and Me*

Because I didn't have any broadcasting work, I threw everything into it. It happened very quickly off the back of the second video of Olive and Mabel. The publisher had looked at my social media which was full of pictures of me up mountains. The book was originally going to be called *Olive, Mabel,*

the Mountains, and Me, but as I kept making the videos, they thought it should have a broader appeal than that.

Any especially memorable walks with Olive and Mabel?

Doing the round of Braeriach and Cairn Toul on a December day with very little daylight, trying to walk 35km through the snow with the two of them – that was one of the best days of my life. We need space and wildness occasionally in our lives and that's what I've been missing over the last few months – that utter escape where it's just you and two little furry beasts nearby, and all you can hear is the wind.

How is the outdoor experience different with dogs?

All the good feelings are intensified because you see them having all those great experiences as well – particularly when there is snow. When dogs step on to snow, it's just this primeval, simple pleasure that they're getting. They're also totally putting their trust in you – they are in your care and you've got to look after them. That connection between human and dog feels stronger than ever when in the mountains.

Any tips for surviving lockdown?

My tip is exercise – if I hadn't had exercise, I would have gone mad. But the danger is you try and run away from the black dog of lockdown and you go too hard and exercise yourself to a standstill. I haven't done any sensible runs or cycles of late; they've all just been ridiculously hard because I need that endorphin release.

What led you to support the Trust on *Celebrity Mastermind*?

There's a quote inscribed on the Scottish Parliament building from John Muir: 'The battle for conservation will go on endlessly – it's part of the universal battle between right and wrong.' The John Muir Trust understands how the landscape, countryside and the wild should be. We all need the spaces that our countries provide far more than a lot of people recognise.

Where is life taking you next?

Hopefully there will be more videos and I'm contemplating another book, but with broadcasting returning this year, it won't be easy finding time to write. I have this vision of businesses being open, everyone doing their jobs and I'm standing on top of a mountain with Olive and Mabel. □

Further information
Olive, Mabel and Me is available from Black & White Publishing, £20.00, oliveandmabelbook.com

About the interviewer
Daisy Clark is the Trust's Fundraising and Digital Campaigns Manager



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