JOHN MUIR TRUST
JOURNAL
69 AUTUMN 2020

Nature fix

Health, wellbeing and economic recovery

JOHN MUIR TRUST

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MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT

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PHOTOGRAPHY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): DAVID LINTERN; AL MEEZAN; NICK HAYES; RAYMOND SIMPSON

COVER: AUTUMN LEAVES BY ALEXANDER M WEIR AT FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/WEIRVIEW/ALBUMS

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Resilient and determined

WELCOME to the latest issue of the *Journal* – one that illustrates how even during these most challenging of times the work of the John Muir Trust remains as relevant and vital as ever.

We are a resilient organisation with talented staff and a dedicated membership, so have been able to adapt to continual change and overcome many of the physical obstacles imposed upon us by the pandemic. While many organisations are, sadly, being forced to make cuts, I am pleased to report that our finances remain in good shape and we are even expanding staff numbers.

As we go to print, we are reminded yet again of the urgency of our work through yet another powerful film by David Attenborough. *Extinction: The Facts* lays bare the global destruction of nature and its potentially catastrophic consequences for the ecological support systems that the human race relies on for its survival.

'Boiling a frog' is a well-worn metaphor that warns of the danger of slow, incremental change. According to that analogy, if you plunge a frog into boiling water it will instantly leap out. But if you heat it up gradually, the frog will placidly adapt to the rising temperature – until it is too late. Scientists, however, assure us that is not the case. In real life, as the water heats up, the frog will become more and more agitated and attempt to escape.

Hopefully, that is now starting to happen to our own species, and on a global scale. We are awakening to the urgent need to lock up carbon to cool the planet. And with Scotland and Wales going to the polls in 2021, just after we leave the EU and the Common Agricultural Policy, and the devolved parliaments take control of policy and direct funding, there is an opportunity to turn the old debates on their head.

Land – and especially wild land – 'wants' to capture carbon. It is in society's interest to incentivise and regulate landowners to capture carbon. But in whose interests is it to have our hills overgrazed by red deer and our moorlands burned? Both activities are driven by a Victorian desire to kill wildlife for recreation. And both benefit a few at the expense of the many.

In Scotland and across the UK, the war of attrition against wild nature is no less dramatic than the scenes depicted by David Attenborough in other parts of the world. The obliteration of the natural tree line, the degradation of peatlands, the overgrazing of uplands, the industrialisation of moorlands and the concreting over of urban green spaces are all part of the same global cataclysm he describes with such eloquence.

A DIFFERENT WAY

In this issue, Izzy Filor explores the plight of montane scrub – a specialist habitat that is in desperate need of help. The article (see page 26) is informed by detailed research conducted in Highland Perthshire, including on Schiehallion where Izzy works as our Montane Scrub Project Officer. Importantly, she points not just to the scale of the loss, but also to work being done by the Trust and others to undo centuries of damage.

David Attenborough too ends on an uplifting note. I will try and avoid a spoiler, except to say that it involves an inspirational example of a government working with conservationists and, crucially, local communities to turn what appeared to be a lost cause into a remarkable success story.

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

With a nod to the same, this issue (see page 14) also carries an in-depth report from the small town of Langholm near the Scotland-England border where the Trust is working closely with the local community in an audacious, landscape-scale plan to transform a former grouse moor into a flourishing nature reserve.

Rather than going it alone, the community approached the Trust at the start, and began to discuss the potential for new models of community-conservation ownership that would involve external organisations and private individuals who all share the same values and aspirations.

This is not an affluent area; it is a former mill town that has suffered long-term economic decline. The market value of the land has been set at £6.4m for the full area, or £4m for a scaled-down sale of just over 5,000 acres. So far, the community has raised almost £3m from various sources, including the Trust.

If you are interested in becoming a stakeholder in an exciting new venture to create the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve, please get in touch with me as soon as possible and we will arrange further discussions and options for you to consider.

Finally, after my first nine months in this post, I would like to thank everyone for their incredible support. It is a privilege to work for this outstanding organisation.

David Balharry
Chief Executive, John Muir Trust

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

The mixed area of land around Thirlmere

Our new friends in the Lakes

The Trust is delighted to begin work alongside Cumbria Wildlife Trust and United Utilities at Thirlmere in the Lake District

In a move that complements existing efforts at Glenridding, the Trust has begun a new working relationship with its neighbours at nearby Thirlmere in the Lake District. An agreement has been reached with United Utilities, which manages the land around Thirlmere reservoir, and Cumbria Wildlife Trust to undertake survey work, with a view to long-term peatland and woodland regeneration and the restoration of natural processes.

Circling west from its most southerly point at Dunmail Raise, the area under the new agreement includes Steel Fell, High Raise and Ullscarf. Immediately to the east, it rises to Helvellyn, currently in the care of the Trust as part of the Glenridding Common lease. Overall, the area encompasses open fellside, mixed woodland, forestry, farmed and industrial heritage, with the reservoir providing water to the towns and cities of North West England.

The joint working offers an opportunity to create a healthier landscape mosaic over a wide area, with the collective effort initially concentrated on a core area of about 15 square km. The ambition is to restore peatland and scrubland, establish new broadleaf woodland, improve wildlife habitat and reduce erosion and the potential for flooding.

Initial work to gauge priorities will involve Trust land managers at Glenridding working alongside Cumbria Wildlife Trust in a survey of peatland, and potential sites for planting and regeneration. This builds on the Trust's previous work replanting rare alpine species on the upper slopes of Helvellyn, with the help of local volunteers in Glenridding, and Cumbria Wildlife Trust's peatland expertise.

Situated at the southern end of Thirlmere, the village of Wythburn was one of two settlements lost in the creation of the reservoir. Its name derives from the 13th century Wythbottune, meaning 'valley where willow trees grow'. There are formative plans to use the climbing expertise of Alpine Club volunteers to return these native trees to the crags.

The collaborative effort also involves West Head Farm, which grazes a reduced but high-quality stock of Herdwick sheep under the watchful eye of a new shepherd, with whom the organisations are looking forward to working more closely. In this initial phase of the project, the two Trusts will also report on access and visitor infrastructure such as gateways and stiles.

Thirlmere is rich in both conservation and literary history, providing the inspiration for writers such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Sir Walter Scott, as well as the impetus for the formation of the National Trust. The Cairn at Dunmail Raise is believed to mark the burial place of the last ruler of the medieval Cumbrian kingdom, King Dunmail.

Within the original management plan for Glenridding Common, the Trust expressed an ambition to find opportunities to work with neighbours, extending and improving opportunities for wildlife and nature on a landscape scale, and so we are delighted to be entering this new phase of work in Cumbria.

Grouse and deer firmly under the microscope

Two major reports that could potentially shape the future of land management in the uplands of Scotland will be considered by the Scottish Government in the coming months. The Werritty Review into the management of driven grouse moors proposes the introduction of a licensing system in 2024 if there is no marked improvement in ecological sustainability and persecution of raptors.

The Scottish Government is expected to announce its intentions sometime in the autumn. Early indications from First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and Cabinet Secretary for the Environment Roseanna Cunningham suggest that it may be inclined to introduce a licensing system earlier rather than later. A further announcement on deer management is expected possibly in December or January.

Earlier this year, the Trust welcomed the hard-hitting report published by the independent Deer Working Group, which called for root and branch reform of deer management laws and systems. A coalition of environmental, forestry and community organisations has urged the Scottish Government to deliver change on the scale recommended in the report. We hope to carry a full analysis of the Scottish Government's decisions on both reports in the spring 2021 issue of the *Journal*.

Call for stronger nature protection post-EU

The Fight for Scotland's Nature campaign – a coalition of almost 40 environmental charities, including the John Muir Trust – has launched a new petition that calls for an amendment to the Scottish EU Continuity Bill, which is designed to provide stronger protection for nature.

As it currently stands, the bill proposes a new environment watchdog. However, this new petition calls for the watchdog to be fully independent of government and to have real powers to take enforcement action on specific environmental complaints.

Please sign the petition at **scotlink.eaction.online/naturelaws**

Rainforest alliance

The Trust continues to support the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest – a voluntary partnership of 20 organisations working to reverse the long-term decline of Scotland's ancient Atlantic woodlands.

The partnership has published an important report which reveals that the remnant areas of rainforest along the west coast have fallen to just 30,325 hectares – less than a fifth of the area of rainforest that we could have in Scotland.

As such, the group has now established a set of targets and strategies which aim to restore this globally rare temperate rainforest to a better functioning ecosystem by 2035.

As well as providing policy support, the Trust will contribute to a collaborative monitoring programme by collecting baseline data from its properties within the Atlantic woodland zone, including Sutherland, Knoydart, Lochaber and Skye.

PHOTOGRAPH: NIALL BENVIE

Scotland's Atlantic woodlands once stretched along much of the west coast

PHOTOGRAPH: TERRY ABRAHAM/STRIDINGEDGE.COM

Glenridding extension

The John Muir Trust has welcomed input from the Glenridding community to explore a variety of ownership and management models for Glenridding Common, following the recent stakeholder consultation held by the Lake District National Park Authority in July.

The Park's consultation sought views on offering the Trust a new three-year lease, with an option to purchase during that period. It concluded that the Trust should be offered an extension to its lease for a year to allow further discussions to take place with interested stakeholders, including the local Parish Council that expressed an interest in how the land is governed.

The photograph (left) of the Trust's Glenridding team by Terry Abraham is taken from his latest *Life of a Mountain* DVD – Helvellyn.

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

Scottish National Planning Framework response

The Scottish Government has published all 350 written responses to the Call for Ideas on the fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) and its analysis of these responses. Within organisational responses, support for retaining protection for wild land came from community councils and activists, while opposition for retaining the Wild Land Areas map as part of a spatial framework for onshore wind came from energy companies and an estate agent.

The Executive Summary reflects this division: "It was argued NPF4 should retain or strengthen protection for Wild Land, although concerns were also raised that existing protections act as an effective bar to renewable energy development."

Following the Scottish Government's decision to postpone publication of a draft fourth National Planning Framework until autumn 2021, an interim statement is expected this autumn. Together with our LINK colleagues, the Trust has prepared a briefing for MSPs on the policies needed if NPF4 is to respond effectively to the climate and ecological emergencies.

Responses are available to view at: **https://www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/call-for-ideas/**

Clara begins ranger role in Western Isles

Our partners in the Western Isles have been joined by a new Community Ranger, Clara Risi (pictured). Clara's role is to build on the good work already underway with the community landowning trusts on the Western Isles, and further encourage the care and repair of the area's rich natural heritage through further joint working.

Clara is grateful to the ALA Green Trust for funding the role and enabling her to join the Trust and move to the Western Isles. She already has some exciting projects lined up for the autumn, including working with the Scaladale Outdoor Activity Centre on Harris, which has delivered the John Muir Award since 2015.

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

Big changes on the Fairy Hill

The Trust has been busy repairing paths and preparing for visitors at East Schiehallion

Our new easy access 'Foss Loop' route, completed in December last year, is finally open. This 1.5km path with stone surface, a section of boardwalk – plus five new interpretation boards installed in March – connects the land owned by Forestry and Land Scotland and Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust with that owned by the John Muir Trust. The path wasn't fully safe for visitors until early July due to damage caused by February's storm Ciara and delays to the repairs caused by lockdown restrictions.

Early summer also saw the Trust begin work on repairing the mountain path – work made possible thanks to the support of our Schiehallion path appeal. Contract manager Chris York and Arran Footpaths Ltd prepared stone and aggregate from a borrow pit lower down on the mountain for repairing the path surface.

In late July, a helicopter crew (pictured) worked alongside path contractors to transport the 80 bags of stone and 160 bags of aggregate next to the path ready for the repair work to begin. The path was shut for safety reasons, with the general public extremely understanding of the need for the work.

"Staff and volunteers have worked hard to keep the path in good condition over the past few years by regularly clearing drains and carrying out maintenance," explained Chris. "Over time, available materials like stone and aggregate close to the path have been used up, so we were at the point where additional material had to be brought in.

"The combination of mountain weather and more than 40,000 feet using the route every year means that maintenance will always be needed, but this work should future-proof us for the next few years."

As lockdown eased, visitors to the Fairy Hill multiplied and the car park overflowed. As a result, Perth and Kinross Council have declared the road to Braes of Foss a clearway and no roadside parking is permitted. If you find the car park full when visiting the area, please have a Plan B in mind.

Glenshero Public Local Inquiry

The Glenshero Public Local Inquiry is scheduled to take place in Aviemore between 10 and 18 November. This will determine the outcome of an Electricity Act application for 39 wind turbines proposed on a site adjoining the Stronelairg wind farm, situated among several Wild Land Areas in the Monadhliaths.

Planning expert Ian Kelly will coordinate evidence, prepare an Inquiry Report and represent the Trust. This report will include our own field assessments on the impacts this proposed development would have on surrounding Wild Land Areas 14 (Rannoch-Nevis-Mamores-Alder), 19 (Braeroy, Glenshirra and Creag Meagaidh) and 20 (Monadhliath).

Steve Carver, an expert on mapping and modelling wild landscapes from the University of Leeds Wildland Research Institute, will also prepare an Inquiry Report and give oral evidence at the hearing on the loss of Wild Land if remapped with this development in place.

In addition to the Trust, Wildland Ltd, Mountaineering Scotland, the Cairngorm National Park Authority, NatureScot (previously SNH) and the Highland Council are also opposed to this development and will all participate in the Public Local Inquiry.

The picture (right) was taken from the Càrn Liath above Creag Meagaidh NNR, one of the viewpoints being considered by the Reporter to the Inquiry.

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

Our Wild Future online discussions

Look out for Our Wild Future this autumn – a series of four panel discussions focusing on the issues that matter most to our communities, our experience of wild places and our planet.

Each panel will feature a range of conservationists, activists, writers and experts discussing biodiversity and natural climate solutions; responsible access and sustainable adventure; diversity in the outdoors; and community and conservation.

The talks will be held online via Zoom at 7pm on the following dates:

- The future of wild places – 28 October 2020
- Sustainable wildness – 11 November 2020
- Wildness for all – 25 November 2020
- Community and conservation – 9 December 2020

Tickets are priced at £5 and there will be an opportunity to win fun prizes at each talk. To book and for more details, head to **johnmuirtrust.org/wildfuture**

Trust seeks views on governance

The Board of Trustees is keen to hear Members' views on proposed changes to the Trust's Articles of Association, with consultation now open until 30 November 2020.

The Articles are the Trust's key governance document, detailing a range of matters including its charitable purposes; what powers it has to achieve these; Trustee appointments and their powers; Members and their rights; and how Trustee and Member meetings are conducted. Trustees are proposing revised Articles to reflect changes in company and charity law and to incorporate current good practice.

Members can respond via the survey, or by taking part in one of several online consultation events. A report outlining Members' views will be shared in the new year. Trustees will then review the draft Articles in light of Members' views before putting them forward for formal consideration in 2021.

For full details, visit **johnmuirtrust.org/governanceconsultation**

Wild Waters Appeal update

Many of you have donated to our Wild Waters Appeal to help care for our coastal properties at Sandwood and Skye. Thanks to your generosity, at the time of writing, we've now raised £38,000 of our £46,000 appeal target.

We really can't thank you enough for continuing to support our work throughout this extremely challenging year. Donations will help our conservation staff at Sandwood and Skye carry out beach cleans, habitat monitoring, seabird surveys, path maintenance and other essential work to care for these beautiful wild landscapes and their wildlife.

For more on the importance of our coasts and waters, see the feature on p28. And if you'd still like to donate to this appeal, visit **johnmuirtrust.org/wildwaters**

PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVIE LOGAN

Megan in action; before and after (below)

Skye footpath repair project

The Arran Footpath and Forestry path team spent three weeks on Skye this August, inspecting and undertaking repair work to various sections of the Trust's path network. The work focused on areas most in need of repair, including parts of the Bla Bheinn path and sections of the Druim Hain path at the south west of Glen Sligachan.

The damaged areas are the result of erosion and braiding caused by a combination of heavy rainfall and the high footfall in this hugely popular area for walking.

The team, comprising Skye residents and partners Megan and Davie, focused on specific areas where pre-emptive work will hopefully negate the need for more extensive and expensive work in the future.

The work follows a number of large-scale repair projects undertaken by the Trust and ensures that the considerable investment made – through support of the Wild Ways Appeal – is secure and that the paths are fit for use for many more years to come.

The team will head back to Skye later this year for further work, with a long-term plan to return every year to keep on top of a network of more than 60km of paths managed by the Trust. They have also identified sections of the Druim Hain path that require a greater investment of time and effort, and we hope to focus on this in 2021.

Nature fix

Helen Todd considers the role of nature and conservation in helping people to rebound and recover from the economic challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic

WHILE NOT EVERYONE will admit it, I suspect that many are now familiar with that feeling of the mind, hours-deep into yet another Zoom meeting, wandering to somewhere wild and outside. What is it like right now on Bla Bheinn? Are the leaves on the west coast changing colour? Did the eagles notice the lack of walkers during lockdown? And when can I next escape to the hills?

While being detached from the landscapes we love has been hard for many during lockdown, it is perhaps disconcerting to admit that nature is unlikely to have mourned our absence. It may even have thrived without us.

However, what has increasingly become clear during the Covid-19 pandemic is that while nature might not need us, we certainly need it. For my part, I found that being separated from my beloved countryside during lockdown only served to emphasise how much the natural environment provides context to our lives.

Obviously, we need clean air, fresh water and healthy soils to survive. Nature's raw materials also provide our food, medicines and goods, while its ecosystem 'services' protect and nurture us – such as the bees and other insects that pollinate our crops.

But it's important to remember that humans are also a part of nature. Over and over again, we see evidence of the benefits of time spent outdoors to our health and wellbeing, whether it is in gardens, urban parks, woodlands or, perhaps best of all, visiting wild landscapes.

I live in Edinburgh and, during tough times while in lockdown, I found great solace in knowing that at some point I would be able to return to Scotland's mountains, lochs, coast and forests,

PHOTOGRAPHY: RAMBLERS SCOTLAND

Good for all: enjoying a walk in nature (main); the author on Quinag

or perhaps venture south to the Lake District and beyond.

During the strict lockdown period, the Scottish Government explicitly allowed local outdoor exercise, based on world-class access rights, to continue, recognising its importance for people's general health and wellbeing.

It was uplifting to see the volume of people flocking to the outdoors during such a worrying and challenging time. In fact, polling by Scottish Natural Heritage found that during lockdown 89 per cent of outdoor visitors took regular local walks (up from 77 per cent); 34 per cent of people got a daily dose of nature (compared to 22 per cent prior); and 71 per cent enjoyed the outdoors at least once a week (up from 59 per cent).

All these mini outdoor adventures will have helped to maintain or even boost the nation's health – something that is particularly important in Scotland, where two in five of the country's residents do not take the recommended levels of exercise.

Prior to Covid, physical inactivity was found to contribute to more than 2,500 premature deaths each year, costing NHS Scotland around £94.1 million annually. Similarly, being active in the natural environment brings huge benefits to mental health, greatly reducing the risk of conditions such as depression.

You just have to compare the experience of a sun-dappled bike ride in a local woodland to the same distance covered indoors on an exercise bike. It's like comparing an old commercial forest plantation to an ancient woodland: while both soak up carbon, native woodlands bring added value both for biodiversity and sheer enjoyment.

"In this Covid era, it has become clearer than ever that our desire to access and experience nature is not so much a luxury as an intrinsic human need"

In this Covid era, it has become clearer than ever that our desire to access and experience nature is not so much a luxury as an intrinsic human need.

And while the pandemic has emphasised the importance of nature, it has also raised big, and important, questions about what we want our 'new normal' to look like once this is all over. And there is much to consider. As well as the need to tackle an ongoing health crisis, it is clear that we have also entered a period of unprecedented financial challenge.

RIGHT RECOVERY

Communities, businesses, charities and politicians alike are all searching for ways to kickstart and drive our economic recovery. Encouragingly, many people – including the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee of the Scottish Parliament – talk optimistically about the potential for a 'green recovery' to create a vibrant new economy that has economic and environmental sustainability at its core.

To date, much of the conversation has centred on climate change and renewable energy, but there's a danger that wider opportunities are missed. If we are to be bold and effective in our response to the social, economic and health challenges of the future, we should not forget the role that nature and landscape – and our access to them – must also play.

That's why I believe it is vital for us to present a coherent, evidence-based case for putting nature conservation at the heart of a green recovery – something that Scottish Environment LINK is doing through cross-cutting work that demonstrates how economic investment can benefit both people and nature.

After all, the case for a green recovery doesn't just focus on looking after our own health and that of the planet. Encouraging people outdoors for recreation is vital for the economy too, especially in rural areas. Scottish residents contribute some £2.6 billion each year through recreation – activities that play

→ continued

Mind the gap: funding is needed both to help more people access nature, and to better support honeypot areas

"It's vital that people from all communities and ethnic backgrounds have opportunities to reap the benefits of time spent outdoors"

a valuable role in supporting sustainable tourism, often in more physically remote parts of the country.

Meanwhile, VisitScotland estimates that walking tourism alone is worth £1.26 billion to the economy annually (more than whisky and golf tourism combined). Those tourist pounds support jobs in cafés, B&Bs and shops, as well as ranger services, path builders, outdoor instructors and many more besides.

As we continue to construct a compelling case for a green recovery, it is more vital than ever that we support efforts to enable more people to access the natural world. There are positive signs; a recent survey by Scottish Environment LINK found that 76 per cent of people in Scotland became more aware of nature in their everyday life during lockdown.

Meanwhile, the Wildlife Trusts reported a 2,000 per cent increase in visits to their webcams during lockdown, which suggests a strong appetite for engaging more in the natural world. It's an interest we would do well to harness. After all, as conservationists repeatedly point out, if people do not learn to value nature, then they will not care when its richness is depleted. There is also strong evidence to demonstrate that people who enjoy the outdoors are far more likely to campaign on environmental matters.

Of course, this is not just about engaging with the few. It is vital that people from all communities and ethnic backgrounds have opportunities to reap the benefits of time spent outdoors. For now, the balance is badly skewed; to date, the wealthiest fifth of adults in Scotland are three times more likely to go hill walking or rambling than the poorest fifth.

VISITOR PRESSURES

But, as ever, there is a flipside. As lockdown restrictions eased over the summer months, popular outdoor destinations throughout the UK saw a huge increase in visits, bringing challenges of a different kind. The examples of anti-social behaviour at beauty spots have been numerous, and deeply frustrating. They have led to lurid headlines and generated national debate about how we can better promote responsible access and care for our natural environment.

Even individually responsible visitors have inadvertently led to cumulative impacts and damage simply due to sheer numbers. These issues have underlined how rural communities need help (in other words investment) to support tourism with proper facilities such as trails, toilets, campsites, public transport hubs and car parks, as well as staff to engage with visitors and longer-term education initiatives to promote responsible behaviour.

Investment is also needed in urban areas for paths, woodland management plus blue and green spaces in places where the majority of people live. It has been hugely encouraging to see so many people of all abilities and backgrounds making use of Edinburgh's paths and parks in recent months, while walking during lockdown in Scotland generally has increased by 61 per cent. That's a huge positive for peoples' collective health, but the places that people visit require ongoing development and maintenance.

While it's clear that public funding will be under pressure in the coming years, there must be government resources from across a range of policy areas, as well as other sources of funding such as tourism levies, to help support honeypot areas. If not, the impacts could become starker with each passing year, potentially leading to calls to reconsider Scotland's much-prized access legislation.

UK-WIDE RESPONSE

Of course, it's not just in Scotland that we've seen people step closer to nature during lockdown. A YouGov poll suggests, across Britain, 74per cent of people took up some form of exercise, with six in 10 women and half of men taking up walking (the most popular form of exercise).

As my colleague Gemma Cantelo, Head of Policy and Advocacy at the Ramblers, points out, we know that easy access to green space not only makes us healthier and happier, but also improves our sense of community and encourages positive action to protect the environment.

"That's worth harnessing in the long term," she says. "But we have not experienced lockdown equally. This isn't new – we know poor access to green space exacerbates health inequalities. But the current crisis has brought the personal cost of that into stark relief. That's why we are urging our national governments to see recovery from this crisis as an opportunity to boost walking and improve our access to the outdoors in the long term."

By investing in nature and our enjoyment of the outdoors as we emerge from this crisis, we can make a bold commitment towards ensuring that our nation – and our planet – can look forward to a sustainable future for many decades to come.

About the author
Helen Todd is Campaigns & Policy Manager at Ramblers Scotland and a former chair of Scottish Environment LINK. For more, visit **ramblers.org.uk/scotland**

Further information
For much more on the challenges, and possible solutions around visitor management, see the responsible access feature on p24 of this issue.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN MUIR TRUST

Helping hooves

Nicky McClure highlights how a team of horse loggers has helped expand areas of native woodland at Glenlude

SEPTEMBER saw our regular volunteers return to an altered landscape at Glenlude in the Scottish Borders, the Trust's smallest property. Not only were they now working in smaller groups, following government coronavirus advice, but they were finally able to start preparing the newly felled conifer plantation for native woodland planting – helped by a low-impact, but highly impressive, pair of working horses.

Teamwork Horse Logging had travelled from Dumfries to help clear recently felled timber from the large brash hedges at the north east corner of the property. The presence of Stig, Tyne and their handlers, Steffi Schaffler and Gabriella Seymour, also gave the workers a much-needed boost following a tricky year.

"The project started late because we didn't want to fell during the nesting season," explains Karen Purvis, the Trust's Glenlude Manager. "In addition, mechanical problems and a very wet winter meant that the timber had been left in the plantation.

"There wasn't any risk of Stig and Tyne getting bogged down in the mud. Rather than trashing the ground, they do a really good job of exposing the bare soil, which is perfect for seed setting for tree species."

Horse power: Tyne with Gabriella (main); finishing off on day one

As Stig's handler Steffi points out, "Working on sites like this, which are full of holes and ridges, is tough, but they will be filled in once the horses have been over it a few times. It looks muddy now, but within three months it'll start greening up."

After just a week of horse logging, the land looks much better – as are the spirits of the Glenlude team. Having the horses go over the ground inside the new brash hedges enables more tree seedlings to pop up.

Karen says the new area will eventually link two big sections of native woodland – rowan, aspen and birch that was planted in 1995 and the eight-year-old Phoenix Forest. "It will create a lovely wildlife corridor leading down to the burn, with open areas around it for the ground nesting birds and insect life that's already here. It's going to be amazing!"

About the author
Nicky McClure is the Trust's Communications Officer

Further information
Huge thanks to our funders the SUEZ Communities Trust and AEB Charitable Trust for enabling us to create this upland birch wood, contributing towards the Trust's vision to rewild Glenlude. For more on horse logging, visit **britishhorseloggers.org**

10,000 acres of hope

Alan McCombes visits a Borders mill town that has ambitions to turn a former grouse moor into a nature reserve as part of one of the biggest community buyouts ever seen in Scotland

IN NORMAL TIMES, Langholm pulsates with excitement during the last week in July as visitors from around the world arrive for the annual festivities in the build-up to one of Europe's most dramatic equestrian spectacles. This year, however, the streets are deserted just 48 hours before what should have been the crescendo – the Common Riding from the centre of the town high into the nearby hills to symbolically mark out the boundaries of an area of Langholm Moor which, in 1759, was officially designated by Scotland's Court of Session as 'common land.'

Margaret Pool, like everyone else in the town, is disappointed by the cancellation. She recalls that as a young girl living in distant Falkirk, she would make an epic journey each July with her mother to stay with a family friend in Langholm. "In those days, folk didn't have cars, so you needed three buses to get here," she recalls. "Whenever we reached the Ewes Valley, I would look out for the monument at the top of the Whita Hill, because it felt like coming home. And the Common Riding was the highlight of the year. I just fell in love with Langholm. I never imagined I would eventually come and live here."

In 1964, she did come and live in what was then a bustling mill town, where she would go on to become a pivotal figure in the local community. As chair of the local development trust, the Langholm Initiative, Margaret is now part of a small working group that is spearheading an audacious campaign to bring more than 10,000 acres of Langholm Moor into community ownership and turn around 80 per cent of that land into a nature reserve. If the plan comes to fruition, it would be the biggest community buyout ever seen in Scotland south of the Great Glen, and the most extensive ecological restoration project outside of the Cairngorms.

In these past 56 years, Margaret has seen profound changes in Langholm. "When I came to live here, there were five mills employing over a thousand workers, some of them working around the clock. Country girls from farms away out in the sticks would come and work in the mill during the week, staying in people's homes for bed and breakfast and that would generate extra income.

"The place was thriving – there were four or five baker shops, umpteen butchers, four cafes linked to the mills, it was a different place. It was a rounded economy – farming, forestry and the mills. There wasn't such a thing as tourism to any extent. But gradually, with the development of man-made fibres, the demand for high quality tweed diminished. There was always a niche market, but one by one the mills closed down."

The final hammer blow was delivered in 2018 when the Edinburgh Woollen Mill – originally the Langholm Woollen Mill – moved its headquarters out of the town to Carlisle, just across the border. It was within commuting distance, but the loss of 200 jobs from a small town of 2,300 people left a gaping hole at the heart of the community.

"It is the death knell," said the Chair of the local community council on hearing the news. "I don't know how we can come back from this."

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Then, out of the blue, in May 2019, the Buccleuch Estates made

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE LIDDLE

View westwards over Langholm from the vast moor that dwarfs the town'

an announcement that sent a lightning flash of optimism surging through the town: Langholm Moor, a vast area of broad, rounded hills that rise steeply from the eastern outskirts of the town, was up for sale.

When the news broke, Kevin Cumming was in a caravan with his wife. "It was the first day of a one-week holiday, and from then on my phone never stopped ringing," he remembers. At the time, Kevin was running Wild Eskdale – a community-run ecotourism and nature education project, which among other things delivers the John Muir Award.

Although just 34 years old, Kevin has a wealth of experience which would now prove invaluable to the Langholm community. After starting his working life as a professional footballer with Dundee and Forfar Athletic he went on to university to study for degrees in business administration and nature conservation, and has since worked as an animal keeper, a falconer and an estate manager. On his return from holiday, he wrote a document setting out a powerful vision and a clear plan of action.

"The incredible traditional skills that we have locally could be turned towards improving and enhancing the land and its wildlife"
Alison Hutton

At its core is the creation of an 8,000-acre nature reserve based around the Tarras Water, the small, fast-flowing river that splashes its way from the high slopes of Langholm Moor into the River Esk just south of the town. This vast area of upland is already designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its geological and ecological diversity, and as a Special Protection Area because it is a nationally important haunt of the hen harrier.

Since the end of driven grouse shooting on Langholm Moor in 1997 (see sidebar, p18), this seriously endangered species has flourished to the point where there are now more hen harriers in this location than in the whole of England. The moor is also home to peregrine falcon, merlin, kestrel, meadow pipit, lapwing, curlew, buzzard, golden plover, short-eared owl, raven and red grouse, while black grouse are also a familiar sight here on the rolling Southern Upland hills. Out on the moor with Kevin, we witness within a few minutes a pair of hen harriers helping two fledglings perfect the art of flying and then watch a kestrel swoop down on a vole and carry it off to devour on a nearby fence post.

But for the community, the anticipated Tarras Valley Nature Reserve would be more than just about protecting existing wildlife. "This is an amazing place," says Alison Hutton, a retired teacher and a member of the community buy-out steering group. "In a fortnight, when the heather is in full bloom, it will look breathtaking. But it's not really how this land should be. As a community, we could do something much better with this land.

"We could get young people trained differently. The incredible traditional skills that we have locally could be turned towards improving and enhancing the land and its wildlife. We could turn this moor into a mosaic of woodland, open heathland, wetlands and restored peatlands."

There are also ideas for conservation grazing, with a sustainable mix of cattle, sheep and wild goats to remove thick layers of dead vegetation and revitalise the soils. The community buy-out team

→ continued

are confident that an ecological project on this scale could become the dynamo for the social and economic renaissance of Langholm. "People are interested in the natural world," believes Alison. "A healthy natural environment would be a stronger economic foundation than grouse."

The sheer accessibility of this area of land is a major advantage. The moor comes right down almost to the doorstep of the town and is crossed by a few minor paved roads, popular with birdwatchers. By all accounts, the people of Langholm are generous with their time and money, so there would be no shortage of volunteers to do whatever is required to make a success of this exciting venture.

"The idea for a nature reserve had been raised from time to time in the past by the local raptor study group and others," explains Kevin. "But the difference now is the prospect of community ownership and management, which could turn it into a reality."

SEEKING SUPPORT

When the sale was first announced, Kevin's document was forwarded to a number of potential allies, including the John Muir Trust, and was made available for local people to read. It aroused a level of enthusiasm which surpassed all expectations.

"The idea for a nature reserve had been raised from time to time in the past by the local raptor study group ... community ownership could turn it into a reality"
Kevin Cumming

"When we met with the Buccleuch Estates and declared an interest, they gave us just two weeks to gauge local opinion," says Kevin. "So, we went around the doors and within a fortnight had over 800 signatures, which is 28 per cent of the entire population of Langholm. The legal threshold required to initiate a community buy-out is 10 per cent."

Buoyed by the scale of public support, the community applied to the Scottish Land Fund for a grant to employ consultants – a community development specialist, an accountant, a forester, a renewable energy team, and a land agent to value the property.

Beyond the community, the John Muir Trust was the first organisation to publicly support the initiative. Mike Daniels, the Trust's Head of Policy and Land Management, was widely quoted in the press explaining why: "We are extremely excited about this project. Its ambition and vision are what has attracted us to it and today we are pledging £100,000 to support the community's purchase of the land. The protection and restoration of wild places and the regeneration of rural communities go hand in hand, so we are delighted to support this inspiring initiative. We call on other organisations to follow our lead and support the Langholm Initiative."

The campaign has since received the support of a broad range of national organisations, including Community Land Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Border Forest Trust, Trees for Life, Rewilding Britain, Revive Coalition, and Forestry and Land Scotland. It also has the backing of a host of local organisations plus MSPs from all three political parties represented in the South of Scotland region – SNP, Conservative and Labour.

"We also conducted a major community consultation with public events and encouraged people to submit ideas about what they think we could do with the land," explains Kevin. "Langholm has had a lot of heartache in recent years with the demise of its textile industry, so the project has four cornerstones to it: ecological restoration, community regeneration, renewable energy and wildlife conservation. All are very important to the community."

Interestingly, the consultation revealed a key change. "Local people recognise that the era of industrial textiles is over for Langholm and there is a strong understanding that the natural habitats and beauty of the landscape are huge assets that have been underplayed," adds Kevin. "The community wants to see outdoor tourism as a key part of its local economy. So that helped form a lot of our thinking and has become the underlying foundation of this whole project. It's both exciting and daunting to figure out how we do that sustainably while carrying out ecological restoration on a sensitive site."

While the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve would be the flagship attraction, the proposed community-run estate would also include an additional 2,500 acres of less sensitive land with revenue-generating potential. The steering group is exploring the feasibility of a small solar farm and wind turbine on former grazing land nearer the town. Kevin explains these would be designed sympathetically to the surrounding landscape and would need the support of residents in the general vicinity.

The group has also identified a site that may be suitable for glamping and eco-camping and have further ideas for redeveloping disused and dilapidated steadings. "There is a lot of forestry in the area so we could possibly have some sawmills and maybe even a brewery or a distillery," says Kevin. "This bit of land near the town is not so important ecologically, but if the community requires space for any sort of development in the future – whether that's more forestry, native woodland, housebuilding, or whatever – it could become an important focus for economic regeneration."

He later takes us to a burnt-out farm building deep in the heart of the moor that has been derelict for three years and mentions the idea of it being transformed into a field centre with a bunkhouse for walkers. The community has already been in touch with higher education institutions to explore some of the possibilities.

"Once the community takes over this building, we could, for example, carry out research to establish a baseline for biodiversity against which we can monitor progress over the years," explains Kevin. "We also see this as a base for education – for getting schools both local and further afield involved and offering higher education institutions a facility for postgraduate research. It might also become a base from which we could run wildlife tours."

PRICE-TAG

The £6.5 million price-tag for the 10,500 acres of land has, naturally, provoked some controversy. If it goes ahead, this would be the biggest community buy-out ever seen in Scotland in financial terms. According to Margaret Pool, while the community is strongly supportive of local ownership, there is some negativity towards the idea of handing such a huge sum of money to the Duke of Buccleuch, whose ancestors were given the land many centuries ago as a gift by Royal Charter.

But the community group is keen to focus on the present and the future rather than the past. "What is the alternative?" asks Margaret. "We have to look at it through today's eyes. The Buccleuch Estates is a business and if Langholm Moor is sold on the open market, we don't know who might come along and buy it."

The community commissioned its own valuation of the land and accepts that the price reflects the potential revenue streams that would come with the purchase. These include eight rented properties, an in-hand farm (which would be run directly by the community) and a large commercial forest plantation at the southern edge of the moor with well-maintained timber almost ready for harvesting.

→ continued

PHOTOGRAPHS: TOM HUTTON, DAVID LINTERN, KEVIN CUMMING

Full of potential (clockwise from main): views over Langholm Moor; male hen harrier; regenerating woodland; Langholm Moor Demonstration Project signage; kestrel with meal; the old farm building earmarked as a future field centre

Kevin's drive and imagination together with the wealth of existing knowledge and expertise in the town have helped galvanise confidence across the generations. Fifteen-year-old Cerys Gough helped to organise a strike of school students at Langholm Academy last November as part of an international youth protest to sound the alarm bells over climate change and the erosion of nature. She has been carrying out volunteer conservation work on the moor for five years, and instantly became involved in supporting the buy-out.

"Not just as a town and a country but as a species, we are facing a serious ecological crisis that is essentially our fault," she argues. "There are many different ways we need to tackle that crisis. One important part of the solution will be to protect wildlife and support biodiversity growth. By buying this land and turning a major part of it into a nature reserve, we will be creating a huge area where wildlife will be allowed to thrive."

"Buccleuch Estates is a business and if Langholm Moor sold on the open market, we don't know who might come along and buy it"
Margaret Pool

A good 60 years older than Cerys, Gavin Graham left school at 16 and worked in the mills for 20 years before going on to become a successful international businessman. We caught up at the Hugh MacDiarmid Memorial Sculpture – an imposing bronze and steel structure high up in the moor decorated with images from the work and life of Scotland's second most acclaimed poet after Robert Burns. Born and raised in Langholm he was a famously controversial figure. "He was a rebel. Half the town don't like him, and the other half think he's great," laughs Gavin. "He was thrown out of the Scottish National Party for being a communist and thrown out of the Communist Party for being nationalist!"

MacDiarmid may have been a provocative character who made some enemies in his hometown, but his love for the Langholm landscape stayed with him until his death in 1978 at the age of 83 and features strongly in his poetry and prose. "After journeying over most of Scotland, England, Eastern Europe, America, Siberia and China, I am of the opinion that my native place is the bonniest place I know," he wrote. "Not by virtue of the little burgh in itself … but by virtue of the wonderful variety and quality of the scenery in which it is set."

Gavin Graham shares that passion for the local landscape and its wildlife. He too has travelled extensively, especially in the United States, and is a big fan of John Muir. "But the pull of home is strong," he says. "I've loved travelling the world, but I've always loved coming home. There is something magical about this area. That valley over there – the Tarras Valley – is like a different world. It feels remote and most people don't know about it, yet it is so accessible. There is a little bit of me wants to keep this secret to myself and not tell anybody, but that would be unfair."

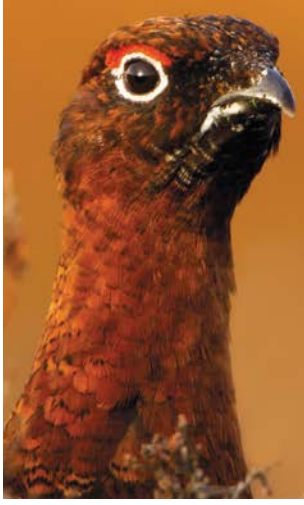
Gavin is saddened by the demise of the textiles industry but is convinced that under community ownership Langholm can prosper once again by making the most of its precious natural environment, its unique cultural heritage and colourful history. The Clan Armstrong centre just outside Langholm, which tells the story of the most powerful of all the Border Reiving families, attracts visitors from around the world keen on exploring their ancestral roots.

Others come to pay homage to Thomas Telford, the famous road, bridge and canal builder who grew up on a nearby farm and was reputedly inspired to learn his trade by studying the challenging topography of a landscape criss-crossed by rivers, burns and streams. Langholm is even the ancestral home of the first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong, who was awarded the Freedom of Langholm when he visited the town in 1972.

"The mills are gone forever, and tourism is now the way forward," believes Gavin. "We'll never attract people who want to lie sunbathing, but this is a beautiful area that would appeal to young professionals and families who are interested in walking, climbing, cycling, wildlife, canoeing on the rivers and other outdoor activities. For that, we need to have wigwams, pods, log cabins with good, attractive facilities. It would be wonderful if we could get this land because the potential is huge."

Further information
For much more on participating in this exciting community buyout, see David Balharry's welcome message on p5 and visit **langholminitiative.org.uk**

About the author
Alan McCombes is the Trust's Public Affairs Advisor and Managing Editor of the *Journal*



Driven grouse and raptors

In recent decades, Langholm Moor has been the focus of two major scientific projects involving stakeholders from government, nature conservation and representatives of the driven grouse industry to examine the relationship between protected birds of prey and the production of red grouse.

The Joint Raptor Study, launched in 1992, was a research experiment monitoring both raptor and red grouse populations. By 1996, the number of hen harriers in particular had risen substantially, while the expected autumn densities of red grouse had declined by 50 per cent, rendering driven grouse shooting uneconomic on a moor that had already lost much of its heather habitat in the preceding decades due mainly to overgrazing by sheep.

In 2008 the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project, involving many of the same partners, was launched to assess whether the moor could be restored as a location for driven grouse shooting without compromising the population of hen harriers and other moorland birds. While it met most of its objectives, the rise in red grouse numbers failed to reach the targets required to resume driven shooting.

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BLG15

Natural kindness

Toby Clark reflects on our changing relationship with nature during the pandemic and how the John Muir Award has helped people to adapt and find positive paths

"AHM DEID!" shouts Ryan collapsing on the living room carpet of his family home in north Glasgow. But then who wouldn't be tired after 30 seconds of wriggling like a worm? The fact that it was a gloriously sunny early evening at the end of May and Ryan was indoors chatting with his youth worker via Zoom says everything about the impact of lockdown.

Even now, writing in August, it remains a rapidly changing situation. Pre-Covid, lockdown, and now adapting to (it is hoped) a post-pandemic society feels like three different worlds in just a handful of months. Concern about the spread of infection and the health of loved ones has, for many, grown into worry about recession and personal finances.

Looking back, the message 'Stay at Home' had a profound impact on lives everywhere. It saw a huge increase in time spent on electronic devices and a whole new set of routines, not least home-schooling. But it also highlighted the modern privileges of those who can afford technology, who have an occupation and space to work from home, as well as access to gardens and greenspace.

There have of course been positives. People have invested in new hobbies, learnt new skills to stay connected with others, and looked out for the more vulnerable. People seek light in dark times. Lockdown highlighted that even small moments of everyday life can have emotional resonance. People want to be part of a kinder world – whether clapping for carers, celebrating the return of fish to the canals of Venice, or naming osprey chicks viewed through nest webcams.

A report called 'Enjoying the Outdoors' from NatureScot, Scotland's Nature Agency, monitored the impact of Covid and social distancing on visits to the outdoors comparing historical data. It found that, while weekly participation levels were higher than might have been expected at that time of year, levels of access were lower among some population groups, including people aged under 45, those living in the most deprived areas, people living in large urban areas and those without access to a car.

The Trust has long recognised that a connection to wild places is vital for health and wellbeing. What was surrendered during the pandemic only served to amplify the value of simple opportunities to connect with nature, exercise, de-stress, learn and play outdoors.

And it wasn't long after lockdown was introduced that the Trust found itself responding to stories, ideas, connections and activities as people adapted to a new way of life. The Trust's fortnightly *Wild Inside* eNewsletter proved hugely popular, while wild places engagement partners around the UK wasted no time in adapting their John Muir Award plans.

FAMILY TIME

Back to Ryan stuck indoors on that early evening in May. "Our main aim is to get families exploring nature together," explained Morven Bruce, Youth Work Coordinator at Lambhill Stables, a community hub that works to improve north Glasgow for all. "Getting together physically as a group was not an option, so we moved our youth club sessions online using Zoom."

During lockdown, Lambhill Stables encouraged parents, carers and siblings to participate in activities together. "Families need opportunities to enjoy the nature that surrounds them, and the John Muir Award helps provide a structure and a goal to work towards," adds Morven.

Overall, the level of family John Muir Award engagement increased significantly as a response to lockdown. Organisations supporting families, especially those working with the more vulnerable, used

PHOTOGRAPH: ALISDAIR WOODBURN

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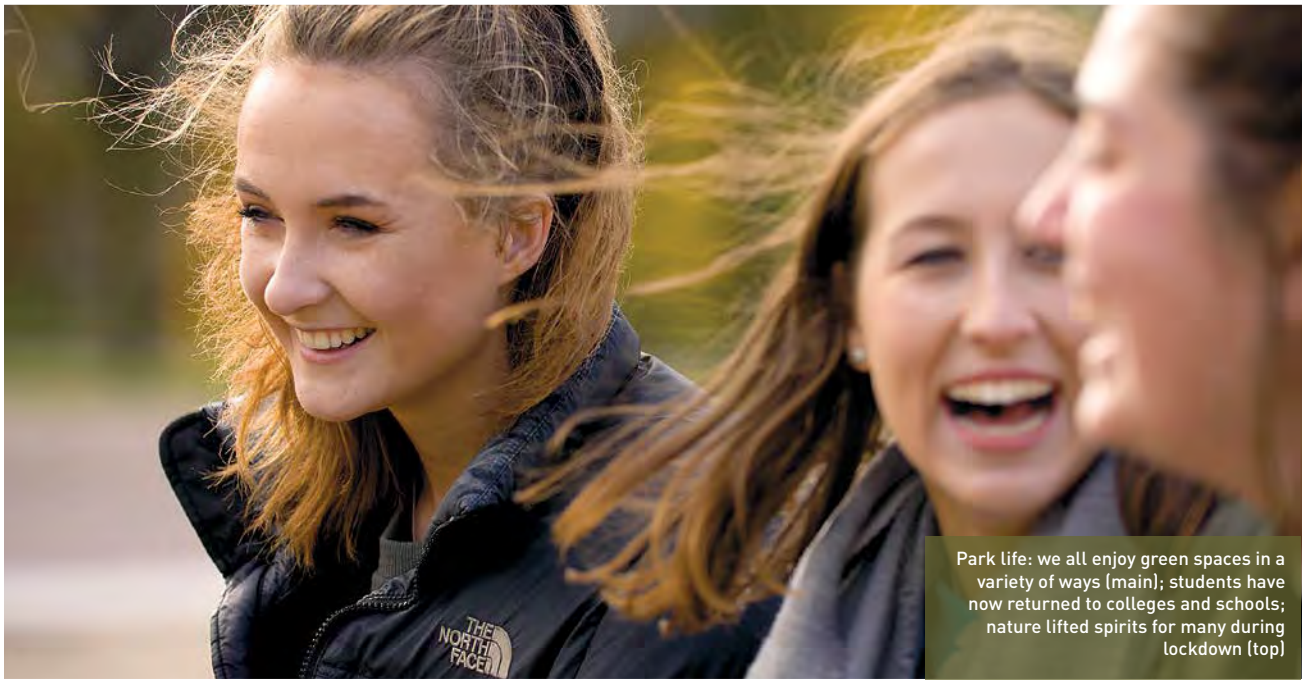

Park life: we all enjoy green spaces in a variety of ways (main); students have now returned to colleges and schools; nature lifted spirits for many during lockdown (top)

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN MACLEOD

Close ties: Glasgow's urban and upland skyline; a lockdown moment (below)

PHOTOGRAPH: ALISDAIR WOODBURN

the John Muir Award to help improve parent-child and inter-generational relationships, boost confidence, or simply enjoy time spent together outdoors.

Similarly, colleges, schools, youth groups and national parks all adapted in a variety of ways during and after lockdown. In Fort William, students on a Countryside Skills course delivered by West Highland College UHI together with Nevis Landscape Partnership moved their enthusiasm for conservation work online via Instagram. Elsewhere, Liskeard School in Cornwall included the John Muir Award as part of its in-school provision for children of key workers and vulnerable children.

And all around the UK, national parks continued to use the Four Challenges of the John Muir Award as an outreach tool to connect people with the special qualities of each area while confined to their homes.

POWER OF KINDNESS

Kindness is at the heart of this willingness to adapt, refocus and find paths to recovery. Through the John Muir Award, the Trust has not only encouraged people to seek out wildness on their doorsteps, but also to take action to help wild nature flourish in communities across the UK. This might be through greening gardens, balcony birdwatching, tackling litter hotspots, or becoming nature and sustainability advocates from home.

According to National Lottery Heritage Fund figures, well over £1.5 million worth of conserve activities was carried out in wild places through John Muir Award activity in 2019 – a phenomenal effort achieved by nearly 40,000 Award participants. Although we've seen less John Muir Award activity over recent months, people's appetite for making a positive difference has remained.

Kindness is multi-dimensional. The Five Ways to Wellbeing is a simple model promoted through public health, NHS services, education and a range of health, community and environmental organisations. It shows, quite simply, that when people engage in the act of giving, they improve their own wellbeing.

This is important societally. Research during lockdown found that more than three-quarters (77 per cent) of young people were concerned about their mental wellbeing. Doing something nice for a friend, a stranger, or for nature helps illustrate how our own happiness is linked to our wider community. In showing kindness for wild places we are, in turn, being kind to others and ourselves.

ADAPT AND ADJUST

Unsurprisingly, it was the organisations working in communities familiar with inequalities that adapted their John Muir Award plans most quickly. After all, work with vulnerable families, young people and adults to ensure that they feel safe and supported has never been so important.

However, there has also been a wider societal recognition of the need to focus on kindness, with governments and education agencies encouraging recovery curriculums based around health, wellbeing and re-engaging learners.

Over the past five years, the Trust has supported, monitored and researched how a variety of learning establishments use the John Muir Award to improve quality in education and raise attainment. This includes a four-year Scottish Attainment Challenge partnership together with East Ayrshire Council.

As schools reopened, the John Muir Award has played a significant role in helping to re-engage pupils who are more likely to have disengaged with learning during lockdown. It has also enabled schools to maximise use of outdoor spaces, as well as continue to demonstrate how wild nature offers a rich curriculum context.

While helping to embed environmental sustainability as an essential component of teaching and learning, a focus on nature connection and learning outdoors is especially important when pupils face poverty as a barrier to learning.

Overall, what's clear is that being kind matters when navigating these still uncertain times. Kindness brings people together positively and helps us all take steps towards a more balanced, resilient and brighter future for both people and wild nature.

About the author
Toby Clark is the Trust's John Muir Award Scotland Manager

PHOTOGRAPH: ALISDAIR WOODBURN

Fresh air and fine views, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park

PHOTOGRAPH: AL MEEZAN

Making a difference

Ria Dunkley explores the idea of ecological citizenship, plus details an ongoing study into the impacts of involvement in the John Muir Award

IN 2010, I returned from a year of travel that took me around the world. The experience opened my eyes to social injustices and to the various impacts that tourists have on the places we visit to find our own joy. Although unclear exactly how, I knew that I wanted to 'make a difference.'

This desire led me to Cornwall and a job at the Eden Project, the environmental charity and visitor attraction that is home to the largest captive rainforest in the world. I was employed as a researcher for two flagship education programmes that demonstrated the connection between the world's human population and climate change.

For me, as with many others, it was the sight of the Keeling Curve – a graph showing the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere – on a slide shared with a visiting school group that made me realise just what a crisis climate change represented. Seeing it set me on a course within my own research where I began to understand that making a difference meant finding ways to engage people with the climate crisis through experiential learning and a focus on hope in human action.

Over the past decade, I've researched how such connections are made for people within school and university classrooms as well as, perhaps more influentially, in informal learning spaces such as botanic gardens, national parks and through citizen science activities.

In my research and teaching, I have found Ecopedagogy – a movement that seeks to re-educate 'planetary citizens' to care for, respect and take action for all life – to be an approach that resonates with my observations about how connections to the natural world develop. The idea, considered radical by some, is that we need to firstly become conscious of our interdependent relationship with the natural environment. Importantly, for an effect to be had, we must be involved in local action in places where we might already be connected or might wish to become more connected to.

Through repetition of such experiential learning, a connection to the natural world evolves within the human mind, and it is this connection that is the basis not only of so called pro-environmental behaviour, but also for the passion that underpins the fight against climate change.

It is this meandering path that led me to Scotland and to a study of the John Muir Award, which I've viewed as an 'ecological stewardship' initiative. In 2019, I began a two-year, and two-phased, research project to discover how the experience of participating in the John Muir Award might play a part in developing ecological awareness for those who complete it.

Phase one involves working closely with a group within Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park to better understand if semi-structured approaches such as the John Muir Award help build nature-human connections and augment the provision of climate change within the curriculum.

Phase two involves a wider-reaching longitudinal study (see Can you help? below) across the UK to ascertain any long-term effects of involvement with the John Muir Award.

From stories gathered to date, it has been fascinating to observe the variety of ways that people become involved with the John Muir Award, but also the part it has played – sometimes highly influential, sometimes more ephemeral – in taking people's lives down so many different paths.

About the author
Dr Ria Dunkley is a Lecturer and Researcher at the School of Education, University of Glasgow

Can you help?

If you would like to speak with me about your experience completing the John Muir Award, please get in touch. The interview would be by telephone, or online using Skype or Zoom. It doesn't matter how long ago you participated in your John Muir Award, nor where or at what level you achieved it. Whatever your experience in gaining your John Muir Award, I would be delighted to hear from you!
Ria Dunkley
ria.dunkley@glasgow.ac.uk

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Pressure points

PHOTOGRAPHY: NATHAN BERRIE

As people head outdoors again in ever greater numbers, **Ross Brannigan** reflects on the growing challenge of visitor management in many of our most popular wild places

STANDING ATOP Beinn a'Chaorainn in the Cairngorms recently, it was hard not to grin as I breathed in a lungful of fresh air – the kind that can only be found in places that have been out of bounds to so many of us for so long.

But in many ways, I have been one of the lucky ones. I was able to enjoy the gentle hills and woodland trails close to home throughout lockdown. For others, however, the easing of restrictions across the UK signalled the first real opportunity to get out and enjoy nature fully again.

The roads, car parks and popular hills have certainly been busy, with the vast majority of people enjoying themselves safely and responsibly as they returned to doing what they love most. When I arrived early at the Linn of Dee car park for my own Cairngorms adventure, there were already people shouldering rucksacks and hoisting bikes from roof racks as they prepared for their own grand day out in the hills.

However, the sudden influx of visitors to popular areas has not come without its problems. Overflowing bins, cars parked precariously on verges and even blocking roads, overcrowding at popular areas and an increased amount of littering have been commonplace.

Of course, the places cared for by the Trust have not been immune to such problems. In August, the area around Sandwood Bay experienced serious congestion on local roads, while campervans were often found parked on areas of protected dunes.

It has been a similar story at other properties where Trust rangers have spent valuable hours clearing up after visitors rather than on conservation work. On a recent visit to Steall Gorge, Nathan Berrie, the Trust's Nevis ranger, encountered several incidents of open campfires over a single weekend. He also returned carrying multiple bags of rubbish.

"Unfortunately, the leaving behind of litter, human waste, nappies, baby wipes, single-use barbecues, abandoned camping gear and large fire scars on the ground has been a common occurrence," he reports. "It has been hard to focus on core tasks because I am having to make regular site visits to clear up after people. Visitor management has become my main priority over the summer."

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

The surge in 'staycation' visitors has shone a light on the considerable challenge of managing access to the outdoors. Whatever the level of awareness of the rights and responsibilities enshrined in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code or the Countryside Code for England and Wales, putting into practice the day to day requirements of such access legislation relies on people connecting with and actually valuing our natural environment.

Perhaps the easiest principle of all to remember is that of 'leave no trace.' Evidence of responsible access exists in its very absence; done well, there is nothing to see. But as the scenes played out around the UK this summer demonstrate, reaching a point where the majority of people take pride in leaving a place just as they found it – or in some cases better – requires a substantial leap.

"In my opinion, the answer – and it's not an easy or quick one – lies in education and teaching people to have respect not only for the countryside but for the country as a whole from an early age," believes Carrie Weager, the Trust's ranger at Sandwood Bay.

"If people are to love the environment, then children must be able to access the outdoors to discover nature for themselves in all its muddy, stingy, scratchy glory. I wouldn't have come to love and care for nature if I hadn't been exposed to it through an outdoor childhood. I know this is increasingly difficult for many, which is why including outdoor education in schools is so important."

Mandatory outdoor education could well help engender a sense of responsibility for natural spaces, while also removing some of the disparities that exist in accessing the outdoors. But it's also about investment and infrastructure. Increased availability of car parking areas would help reduce parking issues in outdoor hotspots, although there is perhaps an even stronger argument for better public transport systems that remove more cars from roads altogether.

One good example is a new bus service established between Fort William and

The good and the bad (from far left): clearing litter on Ben Nevis; a campfire at Glen Steall; grafitti on rocks

Glen Nevis – a development supported by the Trust's partners at the Nevis Landscape Partnership alongside Lochaber Environment Group and Shiel Buses.

This focus on public transport could go further still, with an improved rail and bus network across the country providing smooth and affordable travel. Train tickets such as the Spirit of Scotland travel pass are a great start, although could perhaps benefit from greater promotion.

There is also potential for a system similar to France's free-of-charge *aires*, giving motorhomes and campervans a place to stop and use facilities overnight. Elsewhere, New Zealand offers 'freedom camping', with free camping on public land, often featuring toilets, cooking facilities and other basic infrastructure.

Such a concept could even be extended to small-scale, low-cost, serviced 'wild' camping spots to reduce irresponsible camping – perhaps funded by the proposed 'tourist tax' currently being mulled over by the Scottish Government? But it's a tricky balance. Care is needed not to compete with small, privately owned camping businesses, many of which suffered badly during lockdown and could see income reduced further if more people seek out free, informal camping.

The Trust is working hard in this area too. With the help of funding from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, staff continue to spend considerable time on maintaining footpaths, installing new signage to reinforce access messages and wider visitor engagement.

"In my opinion, the answer lies in education and teaching people to have respect not only for the countryside but for the country as a whole from an early age"

Carrie Weager

TIME TO REGROUP

While visitor numbers post-lockdown caught many off-guard at first, their return brings plenty of positives – not least for rural communities such as the Western Isles that rely on tourism for their livelihoods.

"Most places have been able to open and generate income even if only for the next month, so local people are very glad to see the return of tourism," comments Clara Risi, the Trust's ranger in the Western Isles.

Yet, there are also concerns. Skye, for instance, has just two supermarkets, both of which have experienced significant pressure on stock. Here, however, the community has rallied with the formation of Skye Community Response to assist locals across the Isle of Skye, Lochalsh and Raasay with day-to-day needs, including food delivery.

"Small grocery shops have also increased their stock and offered call and collect or home delivery services to those who need it," adds Cathryn Baillie, the Trust's Skye ranger.

The return of visitors is a welcome sign that we are going back to some kind of normal following an incredibly challenging few months for all. The hope is that with further education, wider engagement, genuine investment in infrastructure, and appropriate enforcement of access legislation, it can be equally positive for the places that are visited in high numbers.

As we continue to recover and regroup in this new Covid world, it is perhaps also about just doing the simple things. In the Lake District – another tourist honeypot that has taken a hammering – Isaac Johnston, the Trust's ranger at Glenridding, sums it up well: "I feel so much better for having just picked up one piece of litter on a day out. At the end of the day, you have taken more away than you left, and that's a great feeling."

About the author
Ross Brannigan is the Trust's Engagement Officer

Missing link

Izzy Filor highlights the plight of montane scrub and explores some of the efforts being made to save this increasingly rare habitat

MANY OF those who enjoy exploring Scotland's wild places will be accustomed to the barrenness of the upland landscape. The term 'wet desert' was coined by the 20th-century naturalist Frank Fraser Darling and still provides an accurate description of the lack of biodiversity throughout much of the Scottish uplands.

Look at almost identical habitats in places such as southwest Norway and there are hillsides covered in downy birch, juniper and pines, all extending well above the natural treeline. But this mountain woodland or montane scrub habitat is almost non-existent in Scotland and other upland areas of the UK.

What little remains is rapidly declining, clinging to cliffs away from grazing animals and often so inaccessible that spotting it requires a tip-off and a good pair of binoculars. Sadly, these remnant populations often comprise so few or such gender-imbalanced plants that, without management intervention, their terminal decline is a certainty.

An ecosystem comprised of scattered trees and tall shrubs, montane scrub forms a transition between the natural treeline and higher alpine heath. It comprises three rough categories of specialist montane plants: dwarf birch, alpine willows and alpine juniper. This habitat can also contain other, non-specialist species such as downy birch, rowan and aspen, which all grow happily – albeit in a dwarf form – at higher altitudes.

As a habitat, montane scrub provides shelter for upland birds such as ring ouzel and black grouse, plus has the potential to support breeding pairs of birds that rarely nest in Scotland, including brambling and fieldfare. Several species of sawfly and moth are also thought to benefit from increased upland scrub habitat.

Understudied as well as underrepresented, the importance of montane scrub in helping limit the effects of climate change – from soil stabilisation to water retention – requires urgent recognition from statutory funding. As most montane scrub species grow slowly, their carbon capture potential is small, but should not be ignored.

RESTRICTING GROWTH

Historic deforestation and present land management practices have damaged and continue to restrict natural regeneration of many types of woodland, including rare mountain woodland habitats.

Deforestation accelerated from the 18th century onwards with the introduction of extensive sheep farming, while red deer numbers were allowed to rise exponentially for sport. Over the last 40 years alone, wild red deer populations have doubled. Today, in combination with upland sheep farming, high levels of grazing continue to suppress natural regeneration of trees and scrub even at the highest of altitudes.

Muirburn is another practice that continues to have a destructive effect on the regeneration of upland areas, permanently damaging natural seed sources, existing vegetation and vital carbon stores.

However, while it is generally thought that overgrazing and muirburn are the major barriers to montane scrub expansion, it should not be ignored that many of these specialist montane species are also fairly fussy about where they grow. Several of the montane willows prefer limestone-influenced soils as well as bare, open ground to allow their seed to take hold.

Equally, it is thought that they are dependent on late snow lie, which protects their thinly bedded roots from frost heave (the snow acts as insulation for the plants, providing a steady temperature during the coldest months) and provides a physical barrier from grazing herbivores during winter.

That said, dwarf birch is also found in low-nutrient soils. There's currently little research to suggest why this might be the case – perhaps this plant has adapted to high grazing pressures by growing in those places least favoured by sheep and deer?

How it could be (from left to right): Birch scrub transitioning into montane willow scrub at Heverfallsaetra, Norway; one of just seven whortle-leaved willows at Schiehallion; the author planting at Glenridding

PHOTOGRAPHY: IZZY FILOR

It is undeniable, however, that climate change will and likely is already impacting these upland specialists. With snow fall, let alone snow lie, becoming increasingly uncertain, fragile populations need to be bolstered before they are lost for good. Dwarf birch, for example, is likely to see almost total range loss in Scotland by the end of the century due to climate change, and its production of viable seed is forecast to dramatically reduce in warmer climates.

The spread of juniper will likely also be hindered further by a changing climate. Its seed is highly dormant, requiring at least two seasonal cycles to break the dormancy before germination. As winters grow ever more variable, the lack of consistency needed to break the dormancy cycle will only be cause for further concern.

"The Trust is exploring how best to increase upland tree cover across its properties and expand existing montane populations"

RESTORATION EFFORTS

Recognising the vulnerability of this specialist habitat, the John Muir Trust recently joined the Montane Scrub Action Group – a partnership of organisations and individuals that advocates the importance of this habitat and supports restoration projects and research. For its part, the Trust is now exploring how best to increase upland tree cover across its properties and expand existing montane populations.

This work is well underway at Glenridding in the Lake District where huge effort has gone into saving one of the last remaining populations of downy willow in England. In partnership with Natural England, Trust staff continue to boost a remnant population of just 23 downy willows. Over the past 18 years, more than 1,000 montane willows have been planted, all grown from propagated cuttings. In recent years, this work has been greatly enhanced thanks to the help of local volunteer growers from the Ullswater valley.

At East Schiehallion, where my work is predominantly focused, the Trust works alongside members of the Heart of Scotland Forest Partnership to promote the importance of this fragile habitat. In 2018, the first plants of a tiny remnant population of montane willows were discovered on the site (they're so small and overgrazed that it's possible to walk over them and not even notice). And last year, a single net-leaved willow plant was discovered on the slopes of Schiehallion – a new record for the area, but one that is functionally extinct unless supplementary planting happens quickly.

These willows are now the focus of yearly monitoring as part of a much wider project – made possible thanks to the generosity of the Lucie Allsop Memorial Fund – to restore a large area of the site with mountain woodland. The project aims to show visitors the potential of upland areas as well as highlight the land management issues faced.

Planting should get underway in 2021 with the aim that, within five years, the majority of the site will have been planted at low density and begun to show signs of natural regeneration (montane willows included).

Similar projects elsewhere in Scotland, many of which are much further ahead, have begun to reveal the benefits of managing upland areas with montane scrub habitats in mind. Work by the RSPB, Borders Forest Trust and National Trust for Scotland at sites such as Abernethy Forest, Carrifran and Ben Lawers respectively all serve as exemplar mountain woodland conservation efforts.

Montane scrub truly has a mountain to climb if it is to stage a recovery. But increased awareness of this threatened habitat and, crucially, a reduction in both grazing pressure and muirburn will go a long way towards restoring the kind of upland biodiversity that has been missing for so long.

About the author
Izzy Filor is the Trust's Mountain Woodland Officer

Rivers of life

Raymond Simpson uses past writings to highlight how freshwater environments are a vital, and vulnerable, component of wild places

WITH 2020 designated as Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters, the John Muir Trust has rightly taken the opportunity to emphasise the importance of coastlines, rivers and lochs in shaping the physical character of wild land and the biodiversity it contains.

But while water sustains life, our waters are also in need of being sustained – a point highlighted when the Trust launched its Wild Waters Appeal earlier this year. An effort to support the care of wild coastlines that fringe Trust properties, from the fragile machair, moorland and dunes at Sandwood to the rugged coastline of Skye's Strathaird peninsula, the appeal has shone a further light on the impacts of climate change, pollution, plastics and over exploitation on the marine environment.

However, in this appreciation of wild waters and their integral role in wildness itself, we must be careful not to overlook the challenges faced by freshwater environments, including river systems that rise and flow through Trust properties.

Some 20 years ago, I wrote an appreciation of a Highland river which has its headwaters on Trust land. Sadly, much of the wildlife it celebrated, and which are a true indicator of wildness, is no longer present, with some species threatened with extinction. Reading the following words now makes me realise how much has changed:

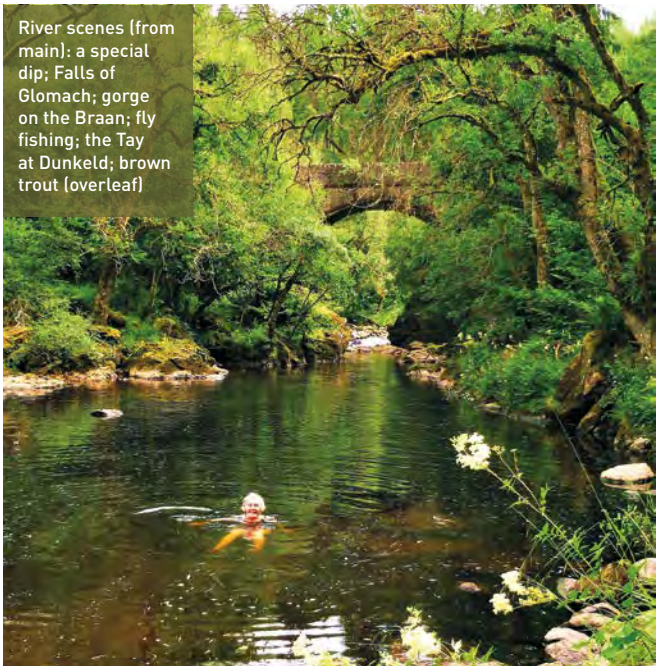
> 'Like a flexing muscle, the big river courses through the valley which is my home. You can see the knots and sinews of its course change subtly from year to year as the gravel banks and islands form and shift, sprouting tiny forests with flood garlands streaming from their branches.
>
> Throughout the long summer days, goosander and cormorant patrol as tern, kingfisher, swifts and osprey quarter the surface of the river. Mallard families, coot, dipper, wagtails and heron stalk the edges until the night shift resumes its vigil, with bats, owl and otter slipping in and out of the cloaking darkness.
>
> At certain times, water insects make an appearance and distract the birds from their usual aquatic quarry. It is on these occasions that the river's indigenous creatures rise to the surface and reveal themselves. Trout, salmon parr and grayling dimple the smoother glides with their nebs or leap and plop leaving behind an enigmatic ring of ripples.
>
> Unlike their feathered or furred compatriots, the salmonoids live in a watery concealment, revealing themselves intermittently. Early in the year, the large fish, Atlantic salmon, returning from the Arctic, run up into the deep lochs, leaping gracefully as they enter the freshwater pools with boundless energy. The summer sees the smaller grilse return to run through the middle river. In the winter, the lowland stretches are populated by big fish intent on spawning.
>
> During their return to sea in the dark, grey months of the year, the lean survivors launch themselves out of their element and fall back wearily, even in their death throes meriting their name, 'Salmo the leaper.'
>
> In autumn, trout also migrate to gravelly spawning grounds in burns and headwaters. On return to the river they reveal themselves, in often surprising abundance, on a mild spring afternoon or muggy summer evening. Some of their brethren now descend further to the brackish estuaries and coastlines of Europe to become sea trout. After a winter at sea, they can be heard splashing an announcement of their return in the half darkness of midsummer nights.

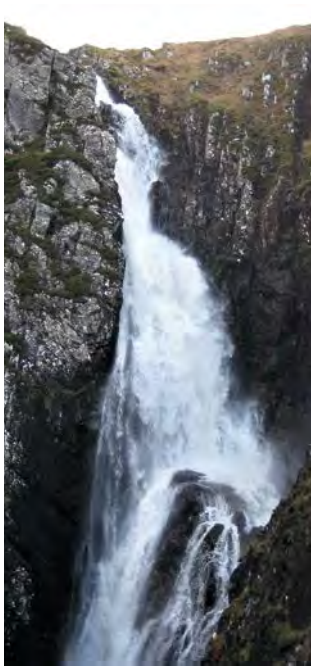
PHOTOGRAPH: SCOTT STEPHENS/UNSPLASH

Going with the flow: healthy rivers serve wildlife and people in a variety of ways

River scenes (from main): a special dip; Falls of Glomach; gorge on the Braan; fly fishing; the Tay at Dunkeld; brown trout (overleaf)

PHOTOGRAPHY: RAYMOND SIMPSON





"Mallard families, coot, dipper, wagtails and heron stalk the edges until the night shift resumes its vigil, with bats, owl and otter slipping in and out of the cloaking darkness"

Such are the perennial rhythms of life accommodated by this river. Migratory fish and birds have controlled each other's populations for millennia. It takes time, patience and perseverance to learn from the river. But for those who are open to that learning, the river is an invitation to see, feel and hear the ongoing rhythm and become part of it.

The trout survives to maturity by escaping predators and following food. It is then driven to spawn, each time depleting its flesh and struggling to regain condition. The fish know the river intimately, sensing subtle changes in the light, temperature, movement, volume and many things of which we have no sense. They seek shelter in protective structures on the bed in almost motionless shoals, and in formation according to size.

In the cold, dark days of winter, they graze the stony bottom and sometimes hang around the mouths of burns ready to escape snow melt deluge. Energy conservation seems more important than hunting at this time. Trout seek out the calmer, warmer water and if there is an abundant supply of caddis larvae, then all the better.

As the days lengthen and the waters warm, trout activity may not increase as they are still conserving energy, lying low, waiting. Then, in the middle of a mild spring day, with a soft southerly breeze and generous cloud, the larvae of march brown or stone flies will drift towards the surface, drawing the hungry trout with them.

Sun, wind and temperature must all be just right for these insects to risk the perilous journey and, at first, the windows

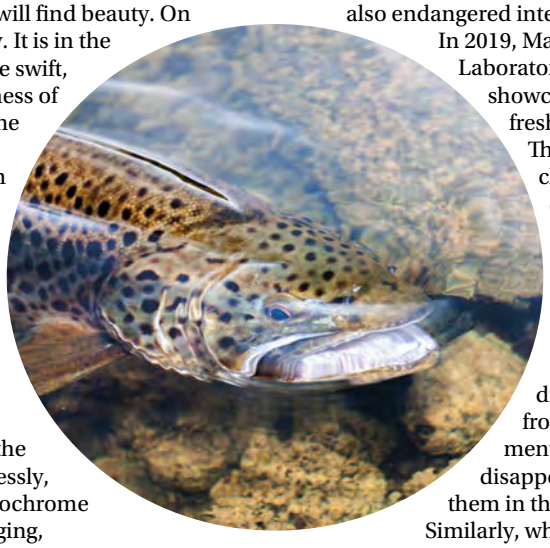
→ continued

of opportunity are brief and infrequent. Winter may return at any moment and cause a wait for kindlier weather to give these creatures the few hours needed to mate and fall, with their fertilised eggs, back onto the water.

This affords the trout three courses: rising nymph, struggling emergers and spent flies. On a good day, they will feed voraciously for a couple of hours or more. However, the fickle weather can curtail the banquet, switching the trout back to energy saving. At such times the river becomes ominously quiet, but the trout, their appetites whetted and blood warmed, may well be active under the surface picking up shrimps, larvae, or hatching salmon aelvin.

Then, during summer, given the right conditions around sunset and sunrise, the trout become bold enough to declare their presence in their favoured locations: the crease of currents, sills of pools, or lines of bubbles. At night, the bigger fish, further emboldened by the darkness, will harass the dimpling parr or slash at sedges or moths in the shallows.

It is said, where there is trout you will find beauty. On the big river there is certainly beauty. It is in the fragility of the caddis, the grace of the swift, the flash of the kingfisher, the quietness of the heron, the dance of the dipper, the sleek surprise of the otter; the lush, verdant slopes of woodland, riparian primroses, foxgloves and wild garlic.



The ever-changing light reveals this beauty in a kaleidoscope of colour as the day and the year turn from the steely grey-blue of winter to the riot of spring colours, through the variegated summer to the burnished bronze of autumn.

And through this beauty and life, the big river stretches and pulses ceaselessly, urgently, restlessly. Even in the monochrome moon darkness, it reveals ever changing, quicksilver patterns punctuated by trout launching themselves with a flash of golden brown, butter yellow and crimson speckled beauty before disappearing back into the safe sinews of the river.'

DRAMATIC LOSS

Since writing these words, many adverse circumstances have affected Highland rivers. Run off and nitrification from forestry and agriculture have increased weed growth and sediment. This has caused a dramatic (70-80 per cent) loss of invertebrates and a reduction in overall invertebrate diversity. These tiny, almost invisible creatures are the basis of the food chain on which all life in the river depends. Without them, all species suffer.

Hydro schemes in the 1950s and 1960s dramatically reduced access to spawning grounds and, 50 years later, we are reaping the consequences as salmon stocks become depleted for many other reasons.

Meanwhile, salmon farming, through uncontrolled lice infestation and genetic dilution of indigenous stocks by escapees, has contributed to the dramatic decline of salmon and sea trout populations in all west coast rivers.

Half a century ago, I worked on the River Ewe system in Wester Ross where the annual runs of salmon and big sea trout through lochs Maree, Clair and Coulin had provided a vast, sustainable harvest to coastal communities and tourists for hundreds of years. I returned to Coulin last year to hear that only nine fish had been caught on the whole system (all of which had been returned).

Even the great east coast salmon rivers such as the Tay, Dee and Spey now see only a fraction of the fish seen just a decade ago. For the last two years, only 650 salmon passed through the fish counter at Pitlochry by the end of May – a figure that, until recently, had stood at 2,000-3,000.

This decline matters on many levels, not least as migratory salmonoids serve as a key ecological vector, conveying vital trace elements, energy and nutrients between marine and riparian habitats. Not only do dead kelts and salmon parr feed many birds and animals, their bodies also help fertilise riparian vegetation.

Marine Scotland, which is responsible for the management of Scotland's coastal waters and seas, introduced legislation five years ago designed to achieve sustainable populations of salmon in Scottish rivers. Catch and release has been almost universally adopted by anglers. Despite this, the number of rivers that have the lowest chance of reaching sustainable populations has increased from 73 to 104 (from a total of 173 rivers). In the same period, egg deposition in one of the major east coast fisheries has declined by 15 per cent.

And it's not just salmon that are in trouble. Freshwater mussels are on the verge of extinction to the extent that the location of surviving colonies is now classified information, while eels are also endangered internationally.

In 2019, Marine Scotland and the Freshwater Laboratory at Pitlochry held an open day showcasing their research into declining freshwater fish stocks and invertebrates. The causes were many and varied, from changes in sea temperature, Atlantic currents, migratory routes, over exploitation of pelagic fisheries, aquaculture, use of pesticides in agriculture, land use forestation and deforestation, plus an imbalance of predators.

In the same year, the press treated the disappearance of one pod of dolphins from the Moray Firth as a tragedy without mentioning the real tragedy which was the disappearance of the salmon that had drawn them in the first place.

Similarly, when seabird populations decline as a result of overfishing of sandeels, we do not hear about the impact on migratory salmonoids for which sandeels serve as a first course that sustains them on their epic journeys. Such crucial interconnections are too often missed when we focus on the plight of individual species.

There are many conservation groups working to address the health of our wild waters. They include the Atlantic Salmon Trust and a range of other conservation bodies who have joined forces to found the Missing Salmon Alliance – a collaborative effort that sees a mix of research and evidence-based campaigning to address issues such as habitat degradation and actions to mitigate against climate change. Sadly, none of this work has been alluded to in this important Year of Coasts and Waters.

One final thought. For many years, the John Muir Trust has involved volunteers in clearing beaches of litter and improving coastal paths. It might now also be time for the Trust to use its considerable influence to help these organisations in their efforts to protect our wild fresh waters and their riparian habitats.

Further information

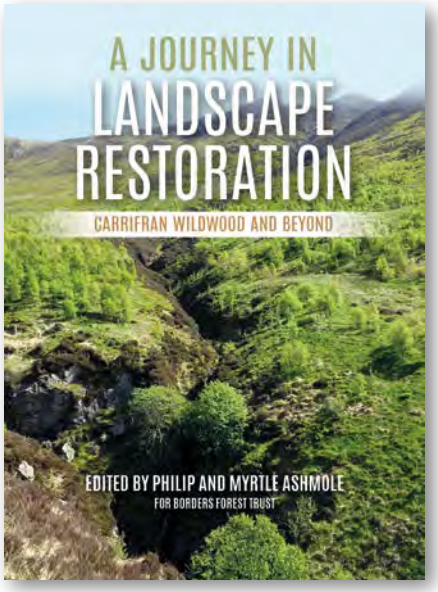
For more on the Trust's Wild Waters Appeal, see the campaigns page at **johnmuirtrust.org**

Atlantic Salmon Trust
atlanticsalmontrust.org

Salmon and Trout Conservation
salmon-trout.org

About the author

Raymond Simpson is a Trustee of the John Muir Trust, based in Dunkeld



A Journey in Landscape Restoration, Carrifran Wildwood and Beyond, edited by Philip and Myrtle Ashmole

Mike Daniels revels in this celebration of the astonishing levels of ecological restoration that have stemmed from two decades of concerted effort across a once barren valley in the Scottish Borders

MANY Trust members and supporters will be familiar with the inspiring story of Carrifran – the community-led rewilding of a valley in the Scottish Borders. Indeed many, along with the Trust itself, have contributed money, time and moral support over the years. In return, in the context of the doom and darkness around climate change, loss of biodiversity and the Covid-19 pandemic, the Carrifran project provides a beacon of light that has guided and encouraged conservation efforts up and down the country.

As Philip and Myrtle Ashmole conclude in the final chapter: "All is not lost, however, and as we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the first trees in Carrifran valley on Millennium Day … we take pleasure in the knowledge that the past and future achievements … can shine a ray of sunshine into a gloomy world, illuminating a pathway by which all of us can help to restore the beauty and vibrancy of life to some small parts of our wounded planet."

This book is a mightily deserved celebration of those 20 years of effort in this valley and the astonishing results, that giving nature a respite from centuries of exploitation, can produce. But it is so much more than that. It is a fact file of the evidence of the benefits that such ecological restoration can bring to the fungi, plants, invertebrates and birds that have recolonised.

Evidence that can be used to counteract the nay-sayers who claim the bare denuded hills of Scotland have 'aye bin' and evidence also of the pleasure and engagement with nature that this restorative work has brought to the hundreds if not thousands of people who have worked on and visited the valley over the last two decades.

On the back of the nearly three quarters of a million trees planted during that time, and alongside the removal of grazing stock, nearly a dozen native plant species have increased and habitats – confined like prisoners to rock ledges away from hungry mouths – have escaped onto the valley floor and sides and spread out in a riot of diversity and colour.

Such an ecological flourishing has stimulated similar initiatives at nearby Corehead and Talla & Gameshope, and indeed in the wider Wild Heart of Southern Scotland and beyond.

By buying, reading and sharing this book you too can help spread the message – that ecological restoration of wild places is the true definition of sustainable development. There is the added bonus that all proceeds from the book will go towards continuing the ecological restoration work of Borders Forest Trust.

£18.99
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About the reviewer
Mike Daniels is the Trust's Head of Land Management

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***Swimming Wild in the Lake District*, Suzanna Cruickshank**
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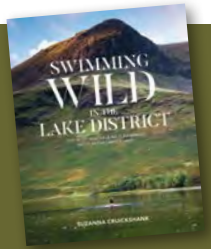

Riders on the Storm: The Climate Crisis and the Survival of Being by Alastair McIntosh

Hugh Salvesen thoroughly recommends a book that skilfully weaves together science, politics, psychology and spirituality to highlight how conventional solutions to climate change are simply not enough

THOSE readers who heard Alastair McIntosh speak at the Edinburgh Members Gathering last autumn may recall that he told the audience that he was working on his latest book, which builds on the themes of *Hell and High Water* (his first book about climate change, published in 2008). And yes, the title does refer to the weird, dystopian song released by The Doors half a century ago.

This follow-up falls roughly into two halves. The first addresses the current science, focusing on the recent reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Sounds dull? It isn't. On the contrary, McIntosh provides a compelling summary of where we've got to as a result of our profligate abuse of our environment, drawing on a frankly amazing quantity of material ranging from specialist scientific journals to President Trump's tweets.

In between the two halves McIntosh tackles both the deniers and the alarmists. Anchored as he is in the science, he takes issue with both. Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion both feature here.

In questioning the latter's understanding of non-violence (another of his areas of expertise), he brings in Gandhi, and so the book moves towards its more spiritual second half. Here, too, we begin to grasp the second half of the book's subtitle, for the *Being is also Truth* – the *satya* in Gandhi's doctrine of *satyagraha* which holds that that which is not true cannot prevail.

As he warns, the last two chapters are the strangest. McIntosh takes us on a journey through four C-words: from the Clearances on Lewis through Collapse (an ingenious attempt to ascribe some of Donald Trump's behaviour to the cultural deracination of his Hebridean mother) to Consumption (there's too much of it) and finally to Community, meaning the theme of land reform which has been so central to his life as both writer and activist.

The other major C-word of our time crops up now and again, but Covid-19 has evidently not occasioned a major rewrite.

McIntosh concludes that the way forward must embrace both head and heart. The head will give us the solar panels, the heat pumps and the green new deals. But we also require a new sense of community, presence and inner grounding. Contemplation as well as action. And, as the last word in the book, compassion.

With the COP-26 conference in Glasgow postponed until November 2021, we all have time to read this book beforehand. I urge you to do so.

£9.99
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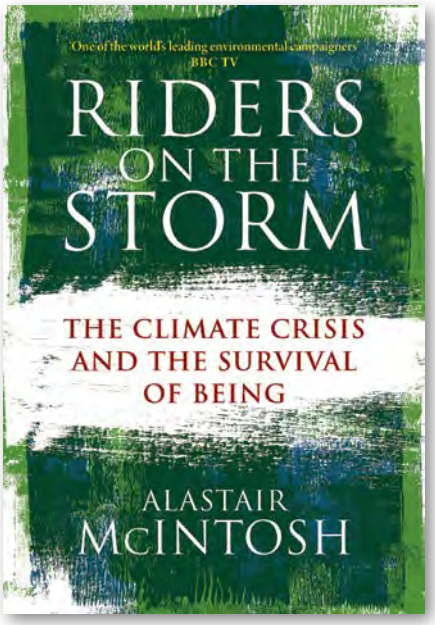

About the reviewer
Hugh Salvesen is a Scottish Blue Badge tourist guide and former Trustee

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In this wonderfully evocative book, the author escapes the claustrophobia of city life to travel around the most remote coastal stretches of the British Isles and explore a landscape shaped not by us, but by a remarkable assemblage of sea birds – spectacular gatherings that are among the world's most impressive wildlife spectacles. Winner of the Saltire Society First Book of the Year 2019.
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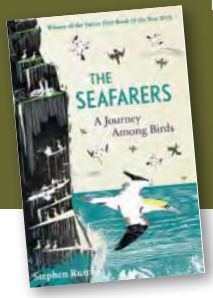
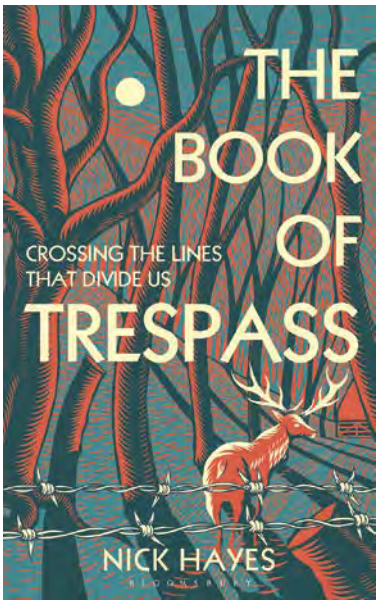


Never Leave the Dog Behind – Our love of dogs and mountains, Helen Mort
Capturing the unbridled joy (and often associated misadventures) of heading to the hills with a four-legged friend, award-winning writer Helen Mort sets out to understand the singular relationship between dogs, mountains and the people who love them. Along the way, she meets search and rescue dogs, interviews climbers and spends time on the hills with hounds. The book is also a personal memoir, telling the author's own story of falling in love with a whippet called Bell.
£12.80. **v-publishing.co.uk**

Nick Hayes

Illustrator turned author and campaigner Nick Hayes has written a new book challenging traditional access restrictions in the English countryside. **David Lintern** finds out more



PHOTOGRAPH: NICK HAYES

Nick Hayes describes rivers as his "heart and soul"

What was the impetus for the book?
I grew up in the countryside and spent a lot of time walking with my sketchbook, and often cut across loose barbed wire to find the perfect scene to draw. As more farmers and gamekeepers questioned my presence, I realised there was something systemic happening. I felt criminalised for simply sitting at the base of a tree and drawing the valley before me. But it was only when I was thrown out of a first-class carriage on a train to London that I decided to write a book about it. It was a perfect analogy for land access in England. The second-class carriage was packed with commuters, shoulder to shoulder, but the two first-class carriages were empty except for a couple. When they called the guard to evict me, I realised how accustomed I was to the orthodoxy that those with wealth can afford the right to exclude those without. So, I started looking into just how much space in England was off limits to the public.

Tell us about the campaign and how access to land ties in with health and wellbeing?
The Right To Roam campaign seeks to expand access over four main terrains in England: rivers, woodland, green belt and down land. These terrains offer the best health benefits to the most amount of people. England is suffering from a health crisis and there is now strong evidence proving what our bodies have known all along – that in mind, body and soul, nature can help heal us. People need the right to access the land around them, so that nature can become part of their daily lives.

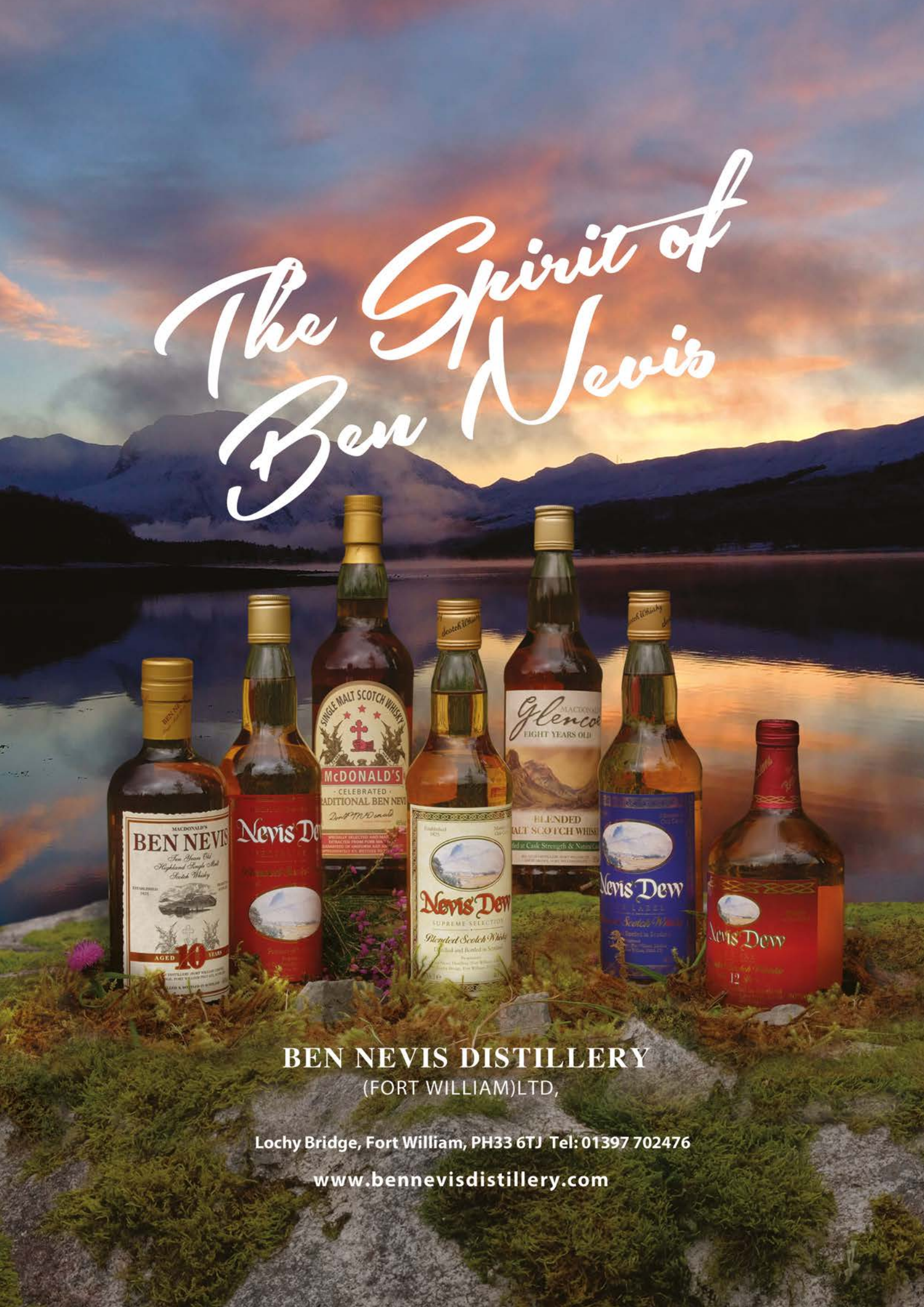
The book was written before lockdown. How has this heightened context changed the experience of access in England?
Now, more than ever, the link between social justice and access to open space has been felt on a visceral level. During lockdown, those with access to space were undeniably more privileged than those locked down in inner city areas. People were more aware than ever how desperately our bodies need to be outside and subsequently how unfair the division of land is in our country.

In Scotland, the right to roam balances rights with responsibilities. How would you like to see the Countryside Code in England evolve?
Every nation in Europe with a right to roam has, at its core, the notion of a greater responsibility to nature. We want to work with farmers and landholders to find an agreeable way to shore up a public responsibility to nature. But to be really effective, this connection with nature must be forged first in childhood. Children need to be able to explore nature and learn about flora and fauna by experiencing it in the flesh.

The campaign aims to extend access into blue space as well as green. What is it about rivers that helps you connect, personally?
I am a swimmer and a kayaker and I live on a boat on the River Kennet [a tributary of the Thames]. Rivers brim with nature and cut through country and city alike. I find them intensely relaxing. Ratty, from *Wind in the Willows*, is a creature that knows how to live life – he spends his days bobbing on his boat, taking in the sun, idling in the finest sense of the word! Rivers are deep veins of peace that can help us to unwind.

Further information
The Book of Trespass by Nick Hayes, £18.00, **bloomsbury.com**
For more on Nick's campaign, visit **righttoroam.org.uk**
A full version of this interview is available on the Trust's website.

About the interviewer
David Lintern is the Trust's Press & Communications Officer



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