

HAPPENINGS AT GLENLUDE 2021

We've had many memorable moments and achieved a great deal at Glenludde this year. Here are some highlights.

Another year of adapting

Whilst the ongoing pandemic curtailed activities slightly, we have managed well over 30 work party days with 20 of our core volunteers giving over 100 days conservation work, keeping the project moving forward at a steady pace.

Work parties

We have had a great turn out of regular and new volunteers to keep us going this year – both in terms of staying on top of projects, and in bringing an energy and enthusiasm to site. A lot of work has been done to improve brush hedges that were affected by snow last winter, allowing us to plant within them. A huge amount of tree maintenance has also been

completed this year with some glorious days down by Phoenix Forest taking the mesh off well-established trees in the sunshine with the birds calling around us.

Several of the volunteers have been concentrating on recladding the back of the hut with larch boards, reinsulating it and making it weatherproof for future use. Others have focused on nursery work - pricking out rowan, oak and hazel seedlings which came up this spring, weeding, and collecting more seed in the autumn for stratifying over winter. The outdoor staging is sagging under the weight of Glenludde-grown saplings so there will be plenty to plant out in 2022.



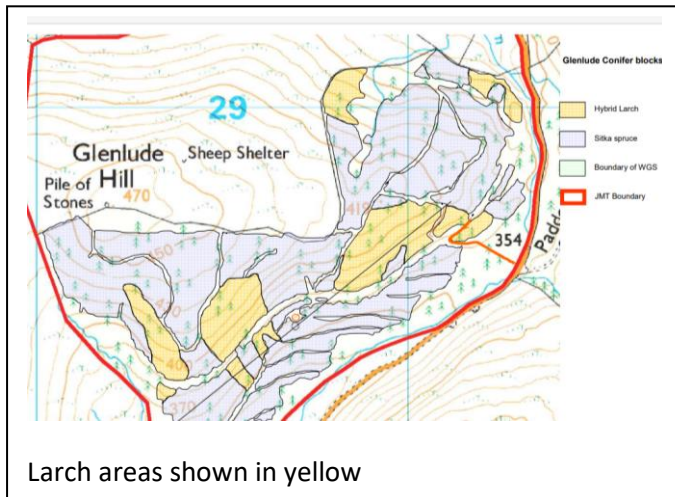
Photo Susan Allan

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Forest operations

Teamwork Horse Logging returned in March to finish relocating the timber within the Phoenix Forest brush hedges on the north side of Glenludde. We were fortunate with the weather but sadly Covid restrictions prevented us from working alongside our volunteers on that occasion. In May, with volunteers back on site, we finally completed the hedging project. We made gates and planted two compartments with birch and oak. It was good to see naturally regenerating willow seedlings growing in there too.

Photos right & below: Karen Purvis



In August we were contacted by Scottish Forestry confirming that the larch (approx. 10 hectares) at Glenludde was infected with *Phytophthora ramorum* (larch disease). A Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) was served with a deadline of 28th February 2022 set for felling. Whilst disappointing, this was not totally unexpected as large areas in Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders have been felled due to infection, some of which are quite close to the site. Following a tendering process, a local forestry company started work on 22nd November and work is progressing well. This will advance the rewilding project significantly and creates great opportunities for volunteering and planting vast numbers of broadleaved trees across the various felled compartments.



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Firewood

The firewood processor came out twice to restock the store, and sales have continued with business picking up over the latter part of the year.

Winter 2020/21 saw pine marten denning in the firewood store over winter - looking after the timber? It certainly made for a cosy den.

Biodiversity

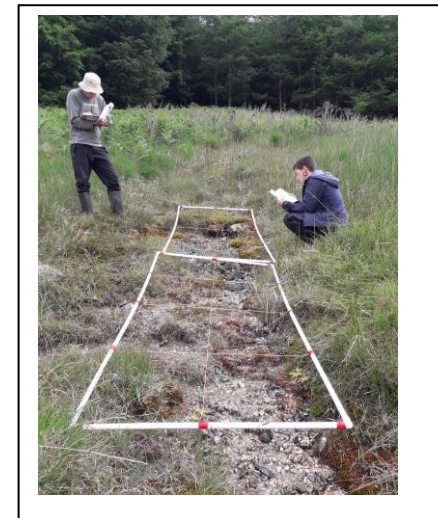
After a quiet start to the year with snow blanketing the ground for a good while, we started our adder surveys in mid-March. At our final survey on the 14th April we were joined by colleagues **Izzy Filor (Schiehallion)** & **Isaac Johnston (Glenridding)** and saw an incredible 14 adders! Many had recently shed their skins so were vibrant in colour-the males a silvery blue and the females a copper colouration with striking dark zig-zags along their backs. At one point we were all lined up across the heather as one male slithered in front of us all giving us one of the best wildlife experiences on site.

Despite spring coming late, the birds did soon come in abundance and a total of 32 species were recorded across the two Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) visits with some impressive totals of:

14 curlew, 77 meadow pipit, 126 willow warbler, 120 chaffinch, 45 skylark, and 60 wren from both BBS visits.

We also had good numbers of other notable birds: 3 grey wagtail, 2 pied wagtail, 2 wheatear, 5 whinchat and 6 stonechat.

There definitely seems to be an increase in birdsong around Phoenix Forest as the planted area becomes more established. Out on the open hill 3 black grouse were also flushed, and 4 males were seen lekking on the hillside across from Glenlude hill one early morning in April which was very exciting to see.



We completed our dwarf shrub heath plots, marked seedlings, and flush plots surveys with the help of volunteers **Enid Forsyth** and **Tim Trumper**. There seemed to be quite a bit of heather affected by heather beetle this year, and ongoing deer/sheep nibbling of young seedlings, however the heather did bloom and we are still finding lots of new birch, rowan, oak, and willow seedlings pop up all over the site so we are hopeful that nature can keep regenerating itself despite these pressures.

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For butterflies we have been improving the habitat of our rockrose areas on site by cutting bracken and heather encroachment. The aim is to open these areas up to encourage more Northern Brown Argus (NBA) butterflies to lay eggs on the rockrose plant which is a food source for the young larvae when they hatch. Volunteers **Rik Smith** and **Cath Shearing** helped clear several areas which have been logged on the GPS and photographed to help future monitoring of these areas. Seeds of the rockrose flower were also taken in late summer (many of which have germinated) and we have been collaborating with Butterfly Conservation to see if we can boost our current rockrose areas with plants grown on in the nursery, ultimately to try and boost our NBA populations.

Nursery and tree planting

Following the first lockdown and removal of the trees to a home base we are starting to build up stock in the tree nursery once more. Alder, oak, hazel, rowan and rock rose were our best successes. Other collected seeds are now stratifying over the winter and we hope to germinate them next spring.

Jamie's Wood continues to expand with friends and family travelling up for two long weekends in May & June. 760 saplings were planted over those weekends and are doing well. To find out more about this project visit: <https://jamieswood.carrd.co/>

Volunteers planted an additional 850 trees (birch & oak) within the Phoenix Forest brash hedges in the spring, forming an extension of the existing Phoenix Forest.

Other groups and visits

Ongoing travel restrictions and pressures on schools/charities has meant that fewer groups than normal have been on site this year. We are certainly missing having these groups on site but there are already dates in the diary for 2022 and lots of expressions of interest in tree planting so watch this space for next year.

One school that did manage to make it down contributed a huge amount of work early this summer. **George Watson's College** who normally head off up north camping before the end of the school year came to us and several other sites in the Lothians & Borders as part of an effort to get young people outside after months of being stuck in home-schooling. They came for 9 days in May/June with over 100 pupils and many staff helping remove old fences, bracken bash, plant trees, dig ditches, reurf the old stell, clean the polytunnel, and repair brash hedges.

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Looking to reduce our carbon footprint at Glenlude in June we hosted a scything workshop on site with **Rob Brodie (Quiet Times)** using traditional Austrian scythes. Regular volunteers **Andy McGregor and Tim Trumper** joined us on a glorious summer day in learning to cut grass and paths around the orchard the old-fashioned way. We look forward to holding another workshop next year and using this low carbon method in more of our path maintenance.



Staff from the **Restoring Hardknott Forest** project in the Lake District came for a day out in August to walk around and share project ideas.

Rachel Coyle, Peatland Officer for Tweed Forum, also visited later in the month to check the areas and levels of peat on site.

In September we hosted a stand at the first ever **Moffat Golden Eagle Festival** organised by **South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project**.

Way back at our bioblitz in 2018 we discovered to our delight that we have rare species of lichen growing on site. In November part of a short film was made on site by **Verity Brosnan, Forest Research** and **Chris Ellis, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh** to help create awareness of the importance of epiphytes in a woodland ecosystem. The film, targeting an audience with very little knowledge of such, is due for release early 2022.

Finally we would like to introduce Charlie, the newest member of the Glenlude team, at 5 months old he's already winning hearts and finding the comfiest seats on site.

Huge thanks go to everybody who came on site this year, contributed to the work at Glenlude and kept us going with their smiles and questions. We look forward to seeing you again next year – we have more exciting projects in the pipeline as well as the ongoing rewilding conservation work.

Wishing you a very happy festive season and all good wishes for 2022

Karen Purvis & Sarah Livingstone

