

JOHN MUIR TRUST

JOURNAL

53 AUTUMN 12

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- 20 The debate on children's dislocation from nature

JOHN
MUIR
TRUST

FOR
wild LAND &
wild PLACES



A photograph of a sunset over a mountain range. The sky is a gradient of purple, pink, and orange. The mountains are silhouetted against the bright orange glow of the setting sun. In the foreground, there is a dark, calm body of water reflecting the colors of the sky.

A certain sun.

The wild flowers have passed on. The greens are changing. Soon the trees will be bare and winter chills will pass through them. Here at the Trust, our habitat monitoring has just finished but we don't go into hibernation. Our work to protect wild land goes on, as constant as the dawns and dusks, as essential as the low winter sun.

If you care about our natural world, please joinus@jmt.org
Or call 01796 470080 and ask about membership

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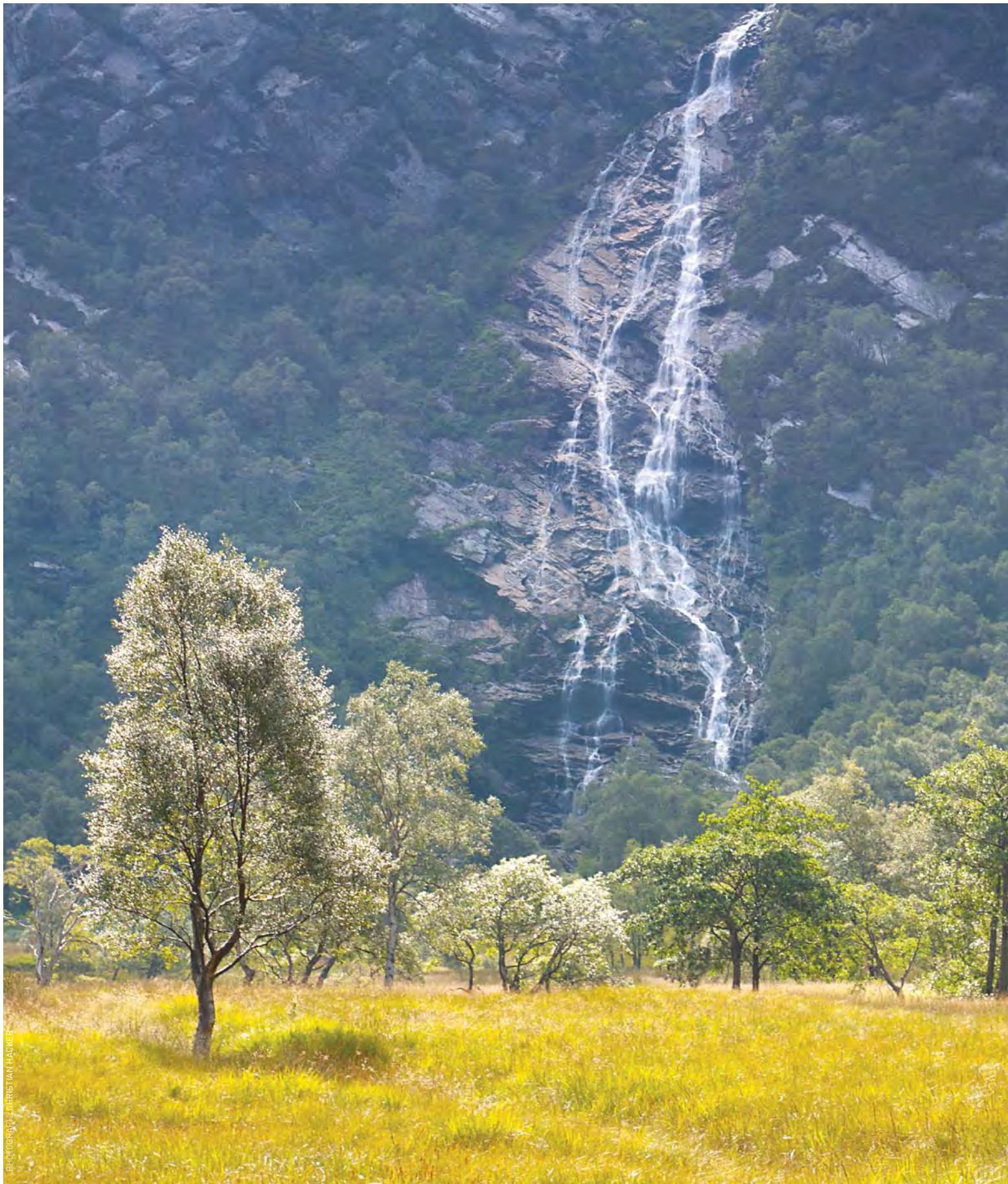
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Cover photography

On the edge of Strathaird looking across Loch Coruisk to the Black Cuillin on Skye
© DAVID LINTERN

Inside front cover photography

Red dawn on Beinn Dearg Mor from across Loch Slapin
© KEITH BRAME



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTIAN HACKER



From the chief executive

Stuart Brooks introduces an issue of the Journal that celebrates and gives thanks to the generosity of so many members past and present

WELCOME TO THE autumn edition of the John Muir Trust Journal. I hope that some of you are picking up this Journal for the first time, perhaps by chance, because it's been passed onto you by a friend, or you are a new Trust member.

As with every issue of the Journal, we have covered a wide range of issues that reflect the many different aspects of our work. Many of you will have seen our recent appeal for funds to help repair the footpath through the Steall Gorge at Glen Nevis. It has been a huge success and we now have the funds for much-needed work on the ground to ensure that visitors can experience a safe and enjoyable walk through this lovely glen. In this edition, we introduce the Trust's new approach to maintaining footpaths generally, as well as exploring the considerable challenges of maintaining footpaths, often in remote locations, across some of the most difficult terrain this country has to offer (see p10).

The success of the Steall Gorge footpath appeal serves to underline the generosity of our members. We receive support from many different sources and one of the most important is from legacies. These particularly personal donations are always accepted with immense gratitude as well as respect and sadness for someone's loss. We carry a huge responsibility, ensuring that people's wishes are carried out and that funds so generously donated are spent wisely (p14). Providing a long-term legacy in the guardianship of our wild places, beloved by so many people, can, I hope, provide some comfort to family and friends.

I would like to thank our many supporters, throughout the history of the Trust, for promoting us and encouraging others to remember the Trust in their wills. The Trust today is to a great extent the product of the ambition and efforts of our predecessors.

This thought is very much alive in an article looking at how the life and achievements of Tom Weir inspired a group of adult learners to undertake a John Muir Discovery Award as part of their journey towards university education (p24). This issue also carries a wonderful tale (p18) from the Sconser community on Skye who are celebrating the life and achievements of a local hero and man of the mountains, John Mackenzie. Together with Norman Collie, the pair became celebrated pioneer explorers of the Cuillin.

Elsewhere, we explore the debate on the relationship between nature and our children's health and wellbeing, and also travel to Slovenia to learn how one of our European counterparts approaches the care of its wild places.

To members old and new – enjoy the Journal.

Stuart Brooks
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
JOHN MUIR TRUST



Picture perfect (left to right from opposite): Steall Falls, one of the many joys of a walk through Glen Nevis; an autumnal close-up on Oldshoremore beach, Sandwood; schoolchildren cross the Telford bridge to work on the Skye sculpture gateway project

PHOTOGRAPH: DON O'DRISCOLL

PHOTOGRAPH: COLLIE MACKENZIE SCULPTURE GROUP

REVISITING SCOTLAND'S LANDSCAPE NEEDS

A half-century on from a ground-breaking conference that examined the state of Scotland's landscapes, a follow-up event in November will consider the future for the nation's countryside. The original conference, in 1962, concentrated on key issues of the day such as the impact of motorway development and expansion of commercial forestry, with the discussions that followed leading to the creation of the Countryside Commission for Scotland, now Scottish Natural Heritage.

This year's event, Landscape Policy & Implementation in Scotland, 'Fifty Years On' 1962-2012-2062 will examine what has been achieved in Scottish landscape policy since then and look ahead to the changes that the landscape will have to contend with over the next 50 years. Held on 27-28 November at Perth Concert Hall, the conference will bring together a range of experts in the past, present and future of Scotland's landscape.

"Scotland's landscapes are a key national asset and make a massive contribution to the quality of life and economic livelihoods of Scotland's people," commented conference organiser William Cairns. "In the sixties and seventies, the nation's

landscapes were under growing and uncharted pressures from new developments – such as mass house-building, motorways, reservoir and oil and gas developments – together with significant changes to agriculture and the wider economy of rural areas. Many of these issues remain relevant today. There are also new challenges from meeting renewable energy and new forestry targets, growing Scotland's reputation as a leading outdoor tourism destination, and improving the health and economy of our largest towns and cities."

The John Muir Trust is one of several supporting partners for the event – a gathering that Trust chief executive Stuart Brooks feels will be both timely and immensely valuable. "I am delighted that the Trust is supporting this conference which comes at a time when the nation really does need to consider the future and value of its landscape," he said.

"There is no doubt we are in a period of unprecedented change and the decisions we take today will leave a legacy for future generations. I will ensure that the voice of the Trust is heard and the decisions and policies influenced by the outcome of this conference will recognise the need to protect our most valuable wild landscapes. Whilst people are talking, there is still hope."

→ www.landscapescotland2012.com

CALL TREE NURSERY TO OPEN

The new tree nursery at Little Assynt will have its official opening on 5 October. Established as part of the Coigach-Assynt Living Landscape (CALL) project, of which the Trust is a partner, the tree nursery is a major step forward for this ambitious conservation land management project.

One of CALL's aims is to increase the area of native woodland in the region. The nursery is part of a wider effort to improve habitat conditions throughout the area and reconnect fragmented habitats. The nursery will provide a reliable supply of native trees, grown from locally collected seed. CALL tree nursery manager, Nick Clooney, will lead on these collections with help from members of the community.

The nursery also meets another of CALL's aims – to establish skilled rural jobs. To date, two posts have been created, with more planned.

The tree nursery launch event is open to all and will be attended by representatives of Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, as well as local MSPs and Highland councillors who have shown support, funders who have enabled it to happen and local people.

For more information, contact CALL project manager Viv Halcrow at vhalcrow@coigach-assynt.org

Viv has also compiled a First Year Review of the CALL project, which is available on request.

Views from Clachtoll, near Lochinver,
Sutherland



TRUST SIGNS TWO NEW PARTNERSHIPS

The Trust recently signed two new partnerships – one with the West Harris Trust and one with the Kynachan Estate adjacent to Schiehallion – that will see close cooperation on a variety of conservation and land management issues.

The partnership with the West Harris Trust, a community landowner which manages 6,400 hectares on the west side of South Harris, was formally sealed during a two-day visit to the island by John Muir Trust chief executive Stuart Brooks in August. The agreement sees the John Muir Trust provide advice in areas such as conservation, ecology, land and visitor management; assist with funding applications for conservation-related projects; support those wishing to undertake the John Muir Award; and promote the work and ethos of the West Harris Trust to Trust members and other bodies.

In turn, the West Harris Trust will help identify and map the core areas of wild land on its estate; manage these areas in line with the John Muir Trust's Wild Land Management Standards, where feasible; keep the Trust informed of conservation, visitor access and interpretation work on the estate; and provide reciprocal promotion.

Trust chief executive Stuart Brooks (left) and Jeremy Robinson, owner of Kynachan Estate, shake hands on the new partnership on the summit of Schiehallion

During his visit, Stuart also met the chair and staff of the North Harris Trust, another community land owner working closely with the Trust. Through Mick Blunt, our manager in the Western Isles, the John Muir Trust has forged a strong relationship with the community in Harris, including involvement in the annual Isle of Harris Mountain Festival.

"These trusts provide excellent examples of where the John Muir Trust is working with communities within a framework that respects the integrity of the wild land," commented Stuart. "Both trusts have clear economic as well as environmental objectives – and so far they are managing to balance the various interests very well."

Murdo MacKay, chairman of the West Harris Trust, said: "West Harris Trust welcomes this agreement that secures a close working relationship with the John Muir Trust. We look forward to working closely with Mick over the coming years as we progress with our plans for the sustainable development of the estate."

Earlier in August, the Trust signed a similar agreement at the summit of Schiehallion with the neighbouring Kynachan Estate, whose holistic approach to land management includes addressing social and environmental matters, and promoting biodiversity and scenic beauty. The partnership is based on similar principles to the West Harris Trust agreement, with additional elements including deer and sheep management, forestry replanting, and reducing the impact of ATVs.

Jeremy Robinson, who owns Kynachan, said that although the estate will continue to be based principally on grouse, deer, sheep and cattle, it will now be run with a far greater focus on sustainable wild land management. "Landowners cannot live in a vacuum and looking after our wild places is a subject of national if not international importance, so should not simply be the business of individuals," he said. "The challenge is to manage our land in a more sensitive and intelligent manner while being open to wider professional views and different perspectives."

FRIENDS OF WEST HARRIS

The west side of Harris is a special place for many who have visited the area or who have a historical family link. The West Harris Trust has therefore founded Friends of West Harris to enable those with an interest to work with the Trust to build a sustainable community, capable of taking care of this beautiful place for generations to come.

Friends' subscriptions will enable activities and projects to take place that would otherwise not be achievable. As well as supporting a sustainable future with one of the John Muir Trust's partners, friends will receive regular newsletters and invitations to special community events.

For further information, contact the trust office. Tel 01859 520785, or admin@westharristrust.org





PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX GILLESPIE

▮ FUNDING PLEDGE FOR CONTRASTING LANDSCAPES

In July, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) announced its first step of approval for almost £4 million of funding towards landscape-scale conservation initiatives for two very different Scottish landscapes – Ben Nevis and the Inner Forth. Both are earmarked to receive almost £1.9 million each.

This significant funding pledge is part of the HLF's Landscape Partnership Scheme – a programme that helps forge public and community partnerships in order to tackle the environmental needs of the local landscape.

Funding for the Nevis Landscape Partnership, which will be received by the now revived Nevis Partnership, will go toward improving the path network on the UK's highest mountain, an area currently visited by around 200,000 walkers each year. The upper reaches of the original 'pony track' – built by hand over 100 years ago and now badly eroded – will be restored; a 6km riverside path will be created to link with existing forest tracks and provide all-ability access to the landscape; and the now overgrown Polldubh Crag, significant in Scotland's climbing history, will be restored and its fauna and flora surveyed. Local communities and schools will be involved through events and training projects, film and social media.

Ben Nevis in all its glory

"We are delighted with this endorsement of the Nevis area, which will allow locals and visitors alike to become involved in a wide range of heritage projects in this important international location," commented Patricia Jordan, chair of Nevis Partnership. "We are also very pleased that the Heritage Lottery Fund has recognised the considerable achievements of the Nevis Partnership, which will now be widened to include other interest groups and organisations."

The Inner Forth Landscape Initiative, meanwhile, covers the upper reaches of the Firth of Forth, from the river's meanders across the Stirling floodplain to the tidal flats of the estuary to Blackness Castle. Recognising that the natural and historic heritage of the river and estuary is overshadowed by its industrial character, the Landscape Partnership aims to reconnect people with the Forth to help change perceptions and rekindle community pride. The initiative will see a new network of linked paths and cycle routes that will make it easier to enjoy the landscape, while fragmented pockets of wetland and woodland will be connected to support biodiversity.

→ www.hlf.org.uk; www.nevispartnership.co.uk

▮ TRUST RECEIVES LAKE DISTRICT ADVENTURE FUNDING

Following funding from the Institute for Outdoor Learning, the Trust is now able to support groups in Carlisle, West Cumbria and Barrow to create new opportunities for enjoying outdoor adventures.

Up to 10 groups of young people, aged between 12 and 21, will be supported to explore, connect with and care for their local countryside and the wider Lake District National Park. They will have the chance to achieve their own John Muir Award and to explore the Lake District through adventurous activities.

"We want to encourage people on the western edge of Cumbria to broaden their horizons by providing assistance with activity instruction or travel to visit the National Park, or to help them design a programme of activities and to submit a John Muir Award Proposal," commented Graham Watson, the Award's regional manager for Cumbria.

"Discovering a wild place could take young people to a hidden gem on the Cumbrian coast, across a lake by canoe or up a mountain in the Lake District. The possibilities are many and varied."

Funding and support will be tailored to the needs of each group, but is limited – so act fast. For more information, contact cumbria@johnmuiraward.org



▮ THANKS TO DAVID

David Stevenson stood down as the Board of Trustee's minute taker in September. David has been taking the minutes at board meetings on a voluntary basis for eight years. In recognition of this valuable service, the board presented him with Tiso vouchers, a pitcher of Ben Nevis whisky and two engraved glasses. John Hutchison, chair of the Trust said: "David's experience and contribution has been hugely appreciated over the years and particularly during the recent governance review. We owe him a great thanks and hope he'll enjoy his new found spare time."



David Stevenson (right) is presented with one of his gifts by John Hutchison

FANTASTIC RESPONSE TO STEALL GORGE APPEAL

Thanks to the generosity of funders and supporters, the Trust's recent Steall Gorge footpath appeal has exceeded expectations and brought in more than enough to cover essential repairs to the path. Work will begin in November to restore a route that WH Murray called "the best short walk in Britain".

While the Trust can no longer accept donations for the Steall Gorge footpath repair, those keen to show their support can still make a donation towards our general path fund which goes towards maintaining and repairing paths across Trust properties (see article on page 10).

To make a donation, please contact the Trust's fundraising team on 0131 554 0114.



Work can now begin on restoring the Steall Gorge footpath

HAVE YOUR SAY ON NATURE CONSERVATION

Those looking to influence the future direction of nature conservation, or who would just like to have their say, can contribute to an online survey as part of a collaborative research project organised by Common Cause together with more than a dozen conservation organisations. The John Muir Trust will contribute to the project through the John Muir Award.

The survey involves eight questions that explore the future role and direction of nature conservation bodies. Depending on the level of detail for each response, the full survey should take between five and 20 minutes to complete. The responses will be fed into a report due to be published in 2013.

→ Take the survey at www.bit.ly/OrRyqI

AGM & MEMBERS' GATHERING 2013

The 2013 John Muir Trust AGM & Members' Gathering will be held at the Pitlochry Festival Theatre over the weekend 3-5 May. Full booking details will be included in the January Members' News. If planning to attend, you may want to consider booking accommodation in the area as soon as possible.

STRONGER TOGETHER

The John Muir Trust recently issued a joint press release with the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS) opposing SSE's recent proposal for an 83-turbine wind farm at Stronelairg in the wild and beautiful Monadhliath mountain range. The proposed development would cover 35 square kilometres of uplands close to Fort Augustus and the Great Glen, and would be clearly visible from many locations in the Cairngorms National Park.

Stuart Brooks, Trust chief executive, said: "In the absence of a coherent energy strategy and adequate protection for Scotland's landscapes, we are left to fight these battles on the front line at huge costs to everyone involved. These places are special because they are wild and beautiful. People's jobs, the tourist industry and our wildlife depend on them. Once we industrialise wild land we change its character forever."

Separately, the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) recently announced its backing for the MCofS 'manifesto' on wind farms which calls for a moratorium on further developments in key upland areas, especially on and around Scotland's Munros and Corbetts.

The MCoS manifesto also seeks urgent action to create a Scottish national spatial renewables policy to harmonise clean energy generation with landscape protection.

"Climbers and hill walkers all over Scotland, and the UK, are deeply concerned about the growing number of highly unsuitable planning applications being made to build huge commercial wind farms in Scotland's most sensitive and beautiful mountain landscapes," commented David Gibson, MCofS chief officer. "We are not opposed to wind farms; we are in favour of conserving our mountains. We are calling on the Scottish Government to work with those who care about the environment to create a clear policy on what will be permitted and where."

"Current measures, including their [the Government's] new good practice guide, are ineffectual responses to an issue with huge implications for our natural heritage, our wildlife and tourism industries," he added.

Dave Turnbull, BMC chief executive, said: "Our members and many overseas climbers have always regarded Scotland's mountains as an important destination of choice, offering year-round challenges for hill walkers and climbers. We are backing the MCofS manifesto because we believe that the mountains must be protected for future generations to enjoy – not just mountaineers but all those who enjoy the landscape."

→ www.mcofs.org.uk/lps.asp





Preventative action

Alan McCombes catches up with footpath project officer, Chris Goodman, to learn about the Trust's new approach to footpath management – and the considerable skill involved in path repair work

WE WANT TO BRING EVERY STRETCH OF FOOTPATH ON TRUST PROPERTY UP TO A WILD LAND STANDARD



PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS GOODMAN

MOST OF US WHO LOVE to tramp our lonelier landscapes don't usually pay too much attention to the path under our feet, except when it disappears under a veil of freshly fallen snow or hides behind a curtain of mist. Only then do we start to appreciate the value of the brown and grey ribbon that meanders its unassuming way across the hillside. Some of us prefer to get off the beaten track, but for those who are not always confident with their navigation, the footpath is the road to freedom, solitude and adventure.

Rural Britain has 250,000 kilometres of footpaths – enough to stretch halfway to the moon. The history of this tangled network is as diverse as the landscape it criss-crosses. Some of the familiar footpaths we walk on today began as coffin roads – or corpse roads – along which mourners would carry their dead from scattered hamlets to ancestral burial grounds. Others began as drove roads, stalkers' paths, or as secret smuggler routes up into remote hillsides, where illegal stills could safely be concealed from the excisemen.

Some famous mountain routes – including the Devil's Staircase near Glen Coe, the Corrieyairack Pass through the Monadhliath Mountains and parts of the West Highland Way – evolved from old military roads built by General Wade and his successors to subdue the Highland clans after the Jacobite uprisings. The Highlands also had a more informal network of paths up to shielings – the clusters of rough, stone shelters on upland summer grazing pastures where women and children would live temporarily while tending their cattle and goats.

Other footpaths were carved out for the specific purpose of opening up access to the mountain tops. The main route up to Ben Nevis, for example, was designed in 1883 as a bridle path for ponies to carry materials to the summit while the old meteorological observatory was being constructed. For 21 years, the Pony Track, as it's still known, was a crucial corridor linking the observatory with the world far below.

WEARING THIN

For many centuries, upland trails could be left untended, with little need for human intervention. But in recent decades, as the numbers taking to the hills have surged, a new breed of artisan has emerged to combine some of the old path-building skills with new techniques. Chris Goodman, our new footpath project officer, has worked on Scotland's mountain footpaths for the past decade with a range of organisations before joining the Trust earlier this year.

Chris traces the beginnings of systematic footpath repair and maintenance to research carried out in the early 1980s by Bob Aitken, a former trustee of the John Muir Trust, backed by the then Countryside Commission for Scotland. He investigated erosion on a sample of hill paths using aerial photographs from the past for comparison.

"Bob found that damage to paths was accelerating as the hills were becoming more accessible and popular," explains Chris. "His survey then led to a project to test and develop techniques and methods of working to tackle the problem. Many of the key skills have been around for a long time and were used, for example, to maintain old stalkers' paths."

Step by step: the Steall Gorge footpath is a priority for repair (opposite); Chris Goodman will oversee the Trust's wider footpath management (top)

Older, built paths tend to be more robust than the newer, unplanned paths that have evolved in recent decades as a result of habitual use by hill walkers. These more spontaneous trails are often poorly aligned and more susceptible to water erosion.

"When the path becomes boggy or rocky, people begin to walk to either side of the path, creating tramlines that run parallel with the path," says Chris. "This is known as braiding, and eventually the lines merge to create a wider track that disfigures the landscape. In some cases, this can destroy vegetation and disrupt habitats. Some popular mountain paths, including on Ben Lomond and in parts of the Cairngorms, grew to more than 20 metres wide in stretches."

The state of Schiehallion in Perthshire was even worse. Chris traces the problem back to the 1970s when the Forestry Commission opened a new car park at the foot of one of the four routes up the mountain – a move that saw the majority of walkers converge on a single route up the hill. By the late 1990s, stretches of the main path had spread outwards until they were more than 30 metres wide. It also suffered from scouring (erosion of the surface by fast running water) and even gullying (deeper erosion which

→ continued



PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS GOODMAN



PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS GOODMAN

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Footpath repair work involves the use of a variety of drainage and erosion features:

Culvert – a funnel that carries a stream underneath a path and looks like a miniature stone bridge

Cross-drain – this has the same function as a culvert, but is open rather than covered. It resembles a tiny canal cutting across a footpath, hemmed in by a narrow, two-sided stone channel

Waterbar – a single line of stone, placed every 25 to 30 metres on steady uphill gradients, designed to divert water off the path as it trickles downhill in wet weather

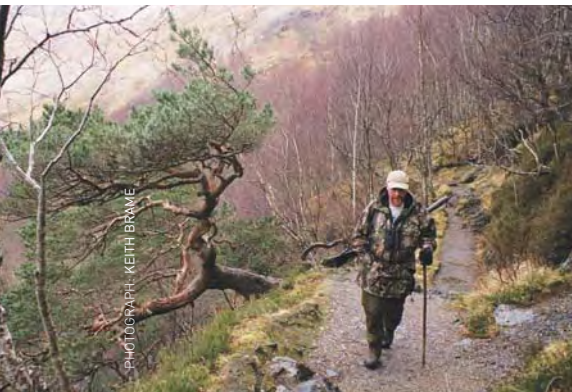
Revetment – a retaining structure, usually built of stone, designed to shore up the edges of a footpath where there is a risk that it could collapse

OUR FOOTPATH FUNDERS

Footpath repair and maintenance is an expensive business and is only made possible through the generosity of Trust supporters. Thank you to everyone who has made a donation over the years towards our footpath work.

The Trust is especially grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Mountaineering Trust, Brown Forbes Memorial Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage for their financial support.

Taking the strain (clockwise from above); a section of eroded path on Sail Garbh, Quinag; Thomas Harper, a trainee from the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust, on a path earmarked for repair on Bla Bheinn, Skye; heading through the Steall Gorge; walkers on the new Schiehallion path



PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRANE

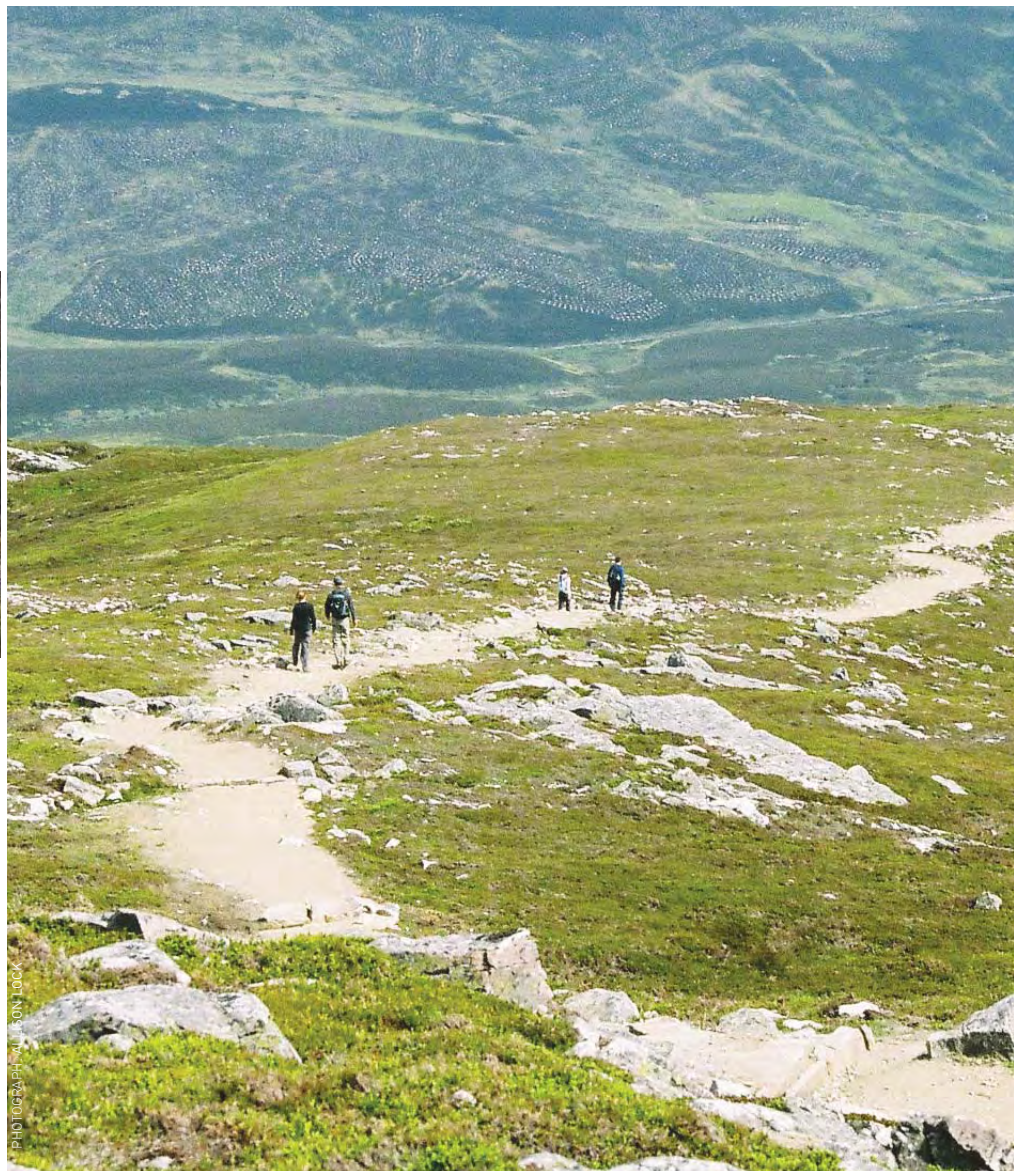
carves out a ditch or channel). The Fairy Hill of Caledonia was left with a gaping scar that was visible for miles around.

The condition of the footpath helped convince the Trust to take over Schiehallion and embark on a five-year project to repair the damage. “The path was realigned to create a more gradual and continual gradient, and rerouted onto more robust ground to prevent it becoming muddy and waterlogged,” explains Chris. “Over time, the wound began to heal. The path now blends more naturally into the surrounding hillside.”

Chris insists that his role is not to make life easier, or even safer, for hill walkers. Like John Muir, he personally likes to explore the mountains beyond the beaten track, alone with the sigh of the wind and the call of the ptarmigan. Individuals roaming free on the mountains pose a minimal threat to habitats; the serious damage is done when large numbers of people walk alongside eroded paths.

Where major repairs are required, Chris will bring in professional contractors, who usually work in teams of three to four. This involves hard, physical labour, often on exposed mountainsides and in treacherous weather. It also demands a high level of skill and expertise. Chris estimates that it takes around two years of full-time work to master the trade:

“It’s not the sort of thing you can learn from a textbook,” he comments. “You need a feel for the natural environment and knowledge of the terrain and geology. And you need a three-dimensional eye to see which materials are suitable, which stones will fit together, and how to keep it all both tidy and natural. It’s half science, half art.”



PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN LOCK

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Major projects now underway include the completion of repair work on the Sandwood Bay footpath and the start of major restoration work at Steall Gorge in Glen Nevis. The latter will include resurfacing and rebuilding stretches of the path, as well as building and repairing cross-drains, waterbars, ditches and revetments (see sidebar opposite for an explanation of terms).

Overall, the Trust is striving to move away from expensive and intrusive restoration work towards a more sensitive, pre-emptive approach. Instead of waiting until the damage has been done, the installation of a cross-drain, for example, can prevent long stretches of path from being eroded. But before that can begin, Chris has to survey every metre of footpath on Trust properties, calculate how many kilometres they cover, and assess what work needs to be done.

It’s a big task, but a necessary one. “We want to bring every stretch of footpath on Trust property up to a wild land standard,” explains Chris. “In other words, reduce their visual impact on the landscape and, as far as possible, make them look like naturalised, evolved hill paths.”

Chris’s work involves surveying paths, budgeting and overseeing contracts. The aim is to develop an in-house team, and a trained group of volunteers for hands-on maintenance work. Chris is also taking on apprentices to train them in the art of sensitive upland path maintenance. He pays tribute to the crucial work carried out by volunteer work parties. “They may not have professional expertise, but they do essential work like clearing out waterbars and cross-drains. We had one hardy work party in Knoydart in April who put in four culverts and resurfaced a section of the path that had been washed out. For days and nights on end, they camped wild and took whatever the weather threw at them. Working on paths is not for the faint-hearted.” □

About the author

Alan McCombes is the Trust’s Communications Editor. He can be contacted at alan.mccombes@jmt.org

Making a difference

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the Trust has become a powerful force for conservation whose work will endure for centuries to come. Adam Pinder explains the vital role of legacies in the protection and regeneration of our most beautiful landscapes and habitats

PHOTOGRAPHY: KEITH BRAME



Chief beneficiaries (clockwise from above): habitat monitoring; Eas Mor falls and surrounding wild land, Glen Brittle; trekking in Nepal through the Bill Wallace Grant; an Award group on Cadair Idris, Snowdonia National Park; drawing nature; Simon Gershon lends a hand at a snowy Glen Lude

SIMON GERSHON HAS ALWAYS loved wild land, but he only joined the Trust in April this year. Since then, he has become actively involved in our work. He became a life member, joined our conservation work parties and has now chosen to mention the John Muir Trust in his will.

No-one would ever take such a decision lightly, but Simon wants to make a commitment to the land that will last far beyond his own lifetime. He says: "I was not inclined to leave more to my family and friends than I thought would actually be valuable to them. As Thoreau said, 'Superfluous money just buys superfluities'. I wanted the remainder to achieve some good in the world, as far as it can. And, if possible, good that will last, through a suitable organisation one can trust."

Legacy gifts have allowed the Trust to buy precious wild lands and put the principles of John Muir and other pioneering conservationists into practice. Such gifts enable us to expand our reach and help local communities carry out valuable conservation work, and they help projects that encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to discover wild places and learn about conservation principles.

The vast majority of legacy gifts we receive are unrestricted, which allows us to use the money wherever it is most needed at the time. Gifts can be ring-fenced where requested, of course. There's also the option to leave a donation to the Trust's Land Management Expendable Endowment Fund, which provides long-term security towards protecting and enhancing our properties.



TYPES OF LEGACY

You can leave as much or as little as you like to the Trust, with several different ways in which you can choose to leave us a gift:

A **pecuniary legacy** is a specific sum of money, decided at the time you write your will. Its real value will decrease over time due to inflation, unless it is index linked. Pecuniary legacies are paid out before dealing with the residue of the estate.

A **residuary legacy** is payable from the remainder of your estate after all debts, liabilities and cash gifts (pecuniary legacies) are paid. The residue of your estate is often divided among several beneficiaries, expressed as percentages of the whole. The value of residuary legacies increases in line with the value of the estate.

A **specific legacy** is a gift of a possession, typically left to a friend or family member. These are usually personal items, such as jewellery or furniture, but can also include land or property. If you intend to leave a piece of land to the Trust – or if you wish to place a restriction on your gift – please discuss this with us in advance as we must ensure that all such gifts meet our charitable purposes.

Please note we would always advise that you consult a solicitor before writing or amending your will.



PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

▮ GIVING FOR THE WILD



PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON GERSHON

There are plenty of worthy causes and organisations dedicated to helping bring about change, so why did Simon Gershon decide on the John Muir Trust?

“I’ve been interested for several years in alternatives to our consumerist culture with its high throughput of energy and materials,” explains Simon. “We are not doing well with making our economy sustainable, and I would like to see progress towards a culture that values personal development and closeness to nature over material possessions and consumption. The John Muir Trust does not have this explicit aim, but its objects and activities all contribute to such a set of values.

“The John Muir Trust is also a mature and successful organisation, in the way it’s run internally and how it engages with the public and the ‘powers-that-be.’ It’s radical in some ways but mainstream in others. So I decided that the John Muir Trust should be able to make use of some of my legacy, to achieve lasting good.

“While I have been fortunate enough to inherit some wealth, and accumulate some more, what I will be leaving will not be much at all on the grand scale of things. However, the John Muir Trust is a relatively small charity. I believe that my gift is likely to make a tangible difference in what it can accomplish – but not soon, I hope!”

Bringing back wildness on the land we own is a long-term process that will always benefit from legacy income. Other work that benefits from legacies includes:

Land purchase – in March of this year, the Trust launched a bid for the Talla and Gameshope estate in the Scottish Borders. It was ultimately unsuccessful, but it was only thanks to accumulated income from recent legacies that we could make a credible bid in the first place. Future legacies may allow us to increase the Trust’s Land Fund and help us extend our land purchases. As development pressures on our wild land increase, this fund may become ever more relevant.

Campaigning – the Trust recognises that it can’t save all our wild places through ownership alone. We spend a lot of time responding through the planning system to the many individual threats to wild land. Most importantly, we engage with politicians and policy makers to campaign for better long-term protection of our great wild landscapes. In a time of increasing change and significant pressure on our landscape, this work is more critical than ever.

John Muir Award – the Award encourages people of all ages and backgrounds into wild places to explore, conserve and gain an appreciation for nature and the outdoors. Our legacy income supports many of these future conservationists. The cumulative effect of Award activity across the UK is huge. Last year, it maintained 32,373 metres of footpaths, cleared an area the size of 100 football pitches of invasive species, picked 82,451 bin bags worth of litter, managed 335,574 square metres of woodland and planted over 20,000 square metres of wildflowers.

The Bill Wallace Grant – increased legacy income allowed Trustees to set aside extra funding to the ‘Go and Do It!’ Fund, established in memory of Trust stalwart Bill Wallace. Each year, grants are awarded to successful applicants who seek out life-changing experiences in wild places. These experiences must benefit both the individual and the wild place.

Quinag from the southeast, approaching Inchnadamph

Conservation Fund – the Trust distributes small grants annually to conservation projects on and around the land it owns. The most recent round of funding supported native woodland work at Dun Coillich in Perthshire and North Harris; the purchase of two stalking ponies at Knoydart; habitat surveys in Assynt and control of invasive Japanese knotweed at Torrin on Skye.

LARGE AND SMALL

Since our first legacy in 1996, we have received more than £3.7 million in legacies. In 2011 alone, legacy income exceeded £1.1 million – as much as in the previous six years combined. 2011 was clearly an exceptional year, and we are already accomplishing a huge amount with this windfall.

Gifts in wills don’t have to be large to make a big difference. Smaller legacies quickly add up, and the combined effect can be huge.

Remember that writing a will is the only way to ensure that your wishes are carried out after your death. If you have been generous enough to include the Trust in your will, please let us know. Legacy pledges help us plan for the future and put strategies into action.

We do hope that you will consider the Trust in your will. Your gift can help secure the future of some of our most spectacular landscapes and ensure that the wild land that inspires you today will survive and thrive for generations to enjoy. ▢

About the author

Adam Pinder is a fundraiser for the John Muir Trust. He can be contacted at adam.pinder@jmt.org, or on 0131 554 0114. If the time is ever right to consider leaving the Trust a gift in your will, Adam would be delighted to hear from you.

Corridors of power

PHOTOGRAPH VISIT BRITAIN

Sheila Wren, our new advocacy officer, is charged with ensuring that the Trust's voice is heard in the very heart of Westminster. Her weeks are already proving busy

I CARE DEEPLY about protecting precious landscapes, so it's a real privilege to be working for the Trust. I was fortunate to grow up in the Malvern Hills but was introduced to 'serious' terrain in various RAF roles, including cadet training and mountain rescue.

At the time, the physical challenge was all important and, like many, I took it for granted that the wonderful wild land in which we tested ourselves would always be there. However, I now understand that such places could disappear unless positive action is taken. The Trust has campaigned hard for many years and it's my job to promote its efforts south of the border. I'm based in Southwark, lodging with the London Wildlife Trust – a great supporter of the John Muir Award.

So far, I've been getting to grips with the key issues, fleshing out campaign plans and meeting as many contacts as possible. My main task is to generate support for safeguarding UK wild land. So, I speak to MPs, Lords, Government officials and statutory agencies, as well as contacts in business, industry, academia and the media. I also work with landscape charities and organisations with similar concerns about the threats facing wild land.

But better statutory protection for wild land will take time, during which it continues to be eroded – mainly by wind energy infrastructure. Therefore, a key part of my role is to question UK energy policy and expose pressures on wild land. I stress that the Trust is not anti-wind *per se*, but that the concern is about the development of industrial-scale wind farms in inappropriate sites. Our

message is that we must be certain that wind energy development is necessary, that it really does contribute economically to the energy mix and reducing carbon emissions, and that sufficient thought has gone into the positioning of future wind farms. If need be, we will object to developments and I draw heavily on our policy team's work in challenging inappropriate schemes.

As I settle into the job, it's already clear that no two weeks will be the same – and that I will not be entirely London-based. Last week, for instance, I participated in an Ofgem workshop about National Grid research on consumer willingness to pay (WTP) for measures to reduce visual impact of replacement transmission lines; attended a course and used the Trust's campaign as a case study which produced some good campaign ideas; and met with a Department for Energy and Climate Change official – an open line that might be useful.

This week, I met with an organisation with similar concerns about energy policy and that has the ear of media and government; worked with other

NGOs on a response to the WTP research; met with the Chief Executive of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, who has recently established an All Party Parliamentary Group; and headed north to walk the route of the Londondale-Stalybridge transmission line, a candidate for undergrounding, as part of a hugely informative day hosted by the Friends of the Peak District. Next week, I'll be in Welshpool, meeting with Glyn Davies, MP for Montgomeryshire, Russell George, Welsh Assembly Member, and groups campaigning against the huge Nant y Moch Wind Farm and transmission line proposals, to see how the Trust might help.

It will then get busier still: next up, it's the Party conference season; the Trust's autumn Parliamentary reception; our exhibition in the House of Commons in November; and lodging our petition.

But I won't be trapped in the city forever. In my time, I've tramped along many remote moors, hills and mountains, but since moving to London I've gone 'soft', so I'm hoping to get out into the wild again with Trust colleagues and members to remind me what it's all about. □



About the author

Sheila Wren is advocacy officer for the John Muir Trust, based in London. She can be contacted at Sheila.Wren@jmt.org

Two of a kind

Jamie Grant travels to Skye to learn about plans to commemorate two remarkable men who will forever be synonymous with exploring the Cuillin mountains



PHOTOGRAPHY: PHOTOCENTRE



PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMIE GRANT

THERE ARE FEW VIEWS of the Red and the Black Cuillin in Skye as spectacular as the one from the Sligachan Hotel. On a clear day, you can scan the shattered peaks and ridges of this great mountain range before letting your eye follow the Sligachan river's wide sweep towards a blue glimmer of distant sea.

It is the perfect setting for a sculpture of the two men who forged the Cuillin's reputation for world class climbing in the late 19th century. John Mackenzie was a crofter from Sconser, nicknamed 'little goat,' who scaled the fearsome peak of Sgurr nan Gillian when just ten years old. He went on to become the first British guide of Alpine standard, leading more than 1,000 climbing expeditions into the Cuillin for over 50 years without a single accident.

Norman Collie was the Manchester-born chemist and scholar who mastered both rock and ice to become one of the finest international climbers of all time. He made 17 first ascents of peaks over 10,000 ft in the Canadian Rockies, scaled Mont Blanc without a guide in 1895 and reached 20,000 ft on the mighty Nanga Parbat in the Himalayas. Collie later became president of the prestigious Alpine Club and was behind Britain's first expedition to Everest in 1921.

Collie's passion for rock climbing was first sparked on Skye during a fishing trip with his brother to the Sligachan Hotel in 1886. Wandering across the moor one day they spotted two tiny figures climbing the Black Cuillin's indomitable Sgurr nan Gillian. Collie was transfixed by the image, later writing, "it seemed to me perfectly marvellous that human beings could do such things".



PHOTOGRAPH: ISLE OF SKYE COUNCIL



He sent a telegraph for some ropes to be delivered to the hotel and later tackled Sgurr nan Gillian with abundant enthusiasm, but little experience. Beaten back twice, he only succeeded on his third attempt after seeking the advice of local ghillie and mountain guide John Mackenzie. The climbing partnership was cemented with a joint ascent of Am Basteir (The Executioner) later the same year.

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

Mackenzie and Collie went on to explore the farthest corners of the Cuillin range together in the 1890s. They pioneered spine chilling routes such as the Formidable Gap and the western face of the Inaccessible Pinnacle. In 1896, they ascended Britain's last unconquered summit, Sgurr a Choire Lochain, and discovered the Cioch buttress in 1899. They left behind the memory of their names with two Cuillin peaks named after them in Gaelic: Sgurr Mhic Coinnich and Squrr Thormaid

What is even more extraordinary about the intrepid pair is that they mastered the Cuillin in all weathers dressed in Norfolk jackets, tweed breeches and hobnail boots. Faced with a particularly difficult pitch Mackenzie would take his boots off and climb in his woollen socks. Once on the tops, the scholar and the crofter would stop to smoke their pipes, preferring unspoken empathy to loose conversation.

As well as their climbing achievements, their story is one of an extraordinary 47-year friendship that defied the rigid class conventions of Victorian Britain. Despite their different backgrounds, they were bound, like the rope slung between them, by a common love of Skye's wildest places. Collie may have climbed in the Alps, Norway, the Himalayas and the Canadian Rockies, but it was Skye and the memory of his friendship with Mackenzie that he would return to at the end of his life.

In 1939, Collie moved to the Sligachan Hotel, aged 80, to take up a solitary vigil over the Cuillin. He was often seen alone out on the moor, or in the hotel's smoking lounge where he liked to drink a glass of wine after dinner. He died in the hotel of pneumonia in 1942 after falling into Storr Lochs on a fishing trip.

His last wishes were to be buried at the foot of Mackenzie's grave in the small graveyard at Struan a few miles up the road. The lie of their headstones, both cut from the gabbro of the Black Cuillin, gives the impression that Mackenzie is still leading Collie on their last great ascent into the afterlife.

TOGETHER AGAIN

A bronze statue to commemorate their lives is earmarked for a rocky knoll across the river from the Sligachan Hotel. Stephen Tinney, the sculpture's creator, has spent years poring over photos of the two men to create a likeness that will be true to their characters and their antiquated dress code. He has even had time to double the height of his workshop and has installed a children's roundabout to spin the sculpture around on while he moulds it out of clay.

The sticking point to the sculpture actually being built is a funding target as daunting as the peaks that Mackenzie and Collie first contemplated over a hundred years ago. The Collie and Mackenzie Sculpture Group needs to find a further £150,000 to cast the two men in bronze. "We have had a lot of support, especially from the John Muir Trust, and all of Skye is behind us," commented the group's chairman, Hector Macleod. "We've put ten years into this and aren't about to give up now."

The sculpture is tantalisingly close to finally being erected. All the infrastructure is now in place with a car park and paths completed. A beautiful dry stone wall, built by stone mason Hector Nicolson with help from 140 eager schoolchildren, is now also in place instead of an old stock fence. The group even managed to persuade energy supplier SSE to bury three hydro poles that had strung an electricity line across the view of the Cuillin from the hotel.

Once finished, Mackenzie and Collie will become a permanent feature in this view – a glittering reminder that you can't separate a landscape from the story of its people. □

Mountain men (clockwise from left): Mackenzie's headstone with Collie's behind; pipe band and workers at the newly built gateway to the Cuillin; the sculpture as it will look once in place; Collie (on left) and Mackenzie

Further info

For much more on the project, including how to donate some bronze for the sculpture, visit www.skyesculpture.com

About the author

A former communications officer at the John Muir Trust, Jamie Grant is now a freelance writer and photographer, based in Glen Lyon. www.jamiemurraygrant.co.uk

Children in nature

A recent report by the National Trust on children's dislocation from nature continues to generate much debate. **Rob Bushby** looks at its findings and highlights where the Trust fits in



PHOTOGRAPH: ROB BUSHBY

THE NATIONAL TRUST stimulated a flurry of media interest in April with the publication of its Natural Childhood report - a detailed study that cites evidence of a long-term and dramatic decline in children's relationship with the outdoors. With a particular focus on the 7 to 12 age group and the so-called phenomenon of 'nature deficit disorder', a term coined by American author Richard Louv in his bestseller *Last Child in the Woods*, the report calls for "the creation of a new way of life for our nation's children", one in which "every child has the chance to develop a personal connection with the natural world".

In the US, Louv's book sparked lively debate on the human cost of alienation from nature. It caught the attention of Michelle Obama and even resulted in trees being placed on the set of Sesame Street for the first time. The National Trust aims to generate a similar level of discussion on this side of the Atlantic and to create what it describes as a road-map that will help reconnect children with nature.

MIXED RESPONSE

There's much to applaud in the National Trust's report. The goal of more children having greater contact with nature is widely recognised as important and worthwhile; the report collates research and identifies the range of potential benefits - physical and mental health, education, community involvement, environmental awareness - that are gained from a connection with the natural world; and it adopts an inclusive approach to stimulating discussion about children's engagement with the outdoor world.

But the report has ruffled feathers, too. The term 'nature deficit disorder' is presented as a pervasive nationwide affliction and is seen by some as overly emotive and burdensome - "as if young people are suffering from a recognised medical condition", comments Geoff Cooper, Chair of the Adventure and Environmental Awareness Group.

The survey results used to portray what the report describes as the "dramatic and worrying consequences of the current situation" also drew a strong response

Soaking it up (clockwise from above): watching the waves roll in, Cornwall; a family backpacking trip; enjoying some down time at Derwentwater; seeing nature through different eyes

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM WATSON



PHOTOGRAPH BY AL SMITH



PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM WATSON

from Rich Mitchell, Professor of Health and Environment at the University of Glasgow, who called for more perspective in the debate. "It's easy to let our worries about children's health obscure the extraordinary progress that has been made," he says. "In the UK, children are safer, better housed and better protected than ever, and [levels of] happiness of 11 to 15 year olds in Britain has risen steadily from 1994-2007."

There is a feeling among some that oversimplifying and overstating a causal link between nature contact and the benefits for *all* children is not altogether helpful. It's certainly a complex area, and difficult to extract from wider peer, parental, school, social and environmental influences on health and well-being. Writing in the Summer 2012 issue of the Institute for Outdoor Learning's *Horizons* magazine, Cooper references a 2011 report, *Children and Nature*, in which Tim Gill, a leading thinker on childhood, analyses more than 60 previous studies. As Cooper states: "The studies present so many variables in terms of the experiences of nature (from urban green spaces to

wilderness), time spent, presence of adults, social and cultural background of young people, that care is needed in making general statements."

And in seeking to simplify a message and quantify outcomes of nature experiences, Cooper wonders whether "some important components, such as spiritual and emotional connections, [are] missed because they are difficult to measure?"

On the question of socio-economics, Professor Mitchell points out that the report mentions poverty only once, with Dame Fiona Reynolds acknowledging, in her foreword, "the problem *is* more pronounced in low-income urban areas".

At the Trust, we have found poverty to be a hugely important factor when it comes to engagement with the outdoors. A three-year University of Glasgow study into the health impacts of the John Muir Award found that young people living in the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland are more than six times less likely to have visited wild places than the norm, and concluded that "efforts should continue to reach the least advantaged".

BROADER DEBATE

The National Trust's report argues that lack of nature contact is a society-wide issue. If that's the case, some would question the report's primary focus on the 7 to 12 age group and would welcome a much broader discussion – one that includes older children and adult carers.

"Parents and teachers are two of the most influential groupings when it comes to considering barriers to accessing nature," comments Andy Robinson, CEO of the Institute for Outdoor Learning. "How are we working with or looking to support these groupings?"

The report concludes with a rallying call, "Towards Solutions", which acknowledges that these groups need to feature and that "conservation bodies must also continue to lead the way in promoting the importance of getting children back to nature".

→ continued



PHOTOGRAPH: BRENDAN TOWEY



PHOTOGRAPH: THE GREEN TEAM/MANDY CRAIG

The discussion generated by the Natural Childhood report and its subsequent road-map should reveal the range of exciting projects that already exist, as well as indicate good practice and tap into political will. Although the report focuses on England and Wales, significant recent progress in Scotland merits a closer look too. Here, there's strong support from national and local government for outdoor learning approaches to help deliver the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, which helps teachers and educators (many with limited outdoor experience) legitimise stepping outdoors to deliver learning outcomes.

And while it can be a challenge to translate political rhetoric into action and resources, the sentiment of Dr Alasdair Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, is not uncommon. "The place of outdoor learning could not be more relevant today ... there is a huge benefit to society through developing more active citizens who demonstrate connection with and understanding of nature and all its life-enhancing elements. [It] aligns superbly with principles of sustainability, biodiversity and the importance of habitat diversity for a healthy population."

Meanwhile, Scotland's two national parks are taking a strong lead with initiatives to engage a wider audience. Their research indicates that young people want to undertake activities in areas further away from their homes as this heightens the sense of adventure and remoteness; they place emphasis on activities rather than areas; and - in terms of engagement with national parks and nature reserves - are motivated by activities with higher levels of perceived risk, such as rock climbing, abseiling, mountain biking and other 'adrenalin' pursuits.

There's plenty going on throughout the UK, too: the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom and Institute for Outdoor Learning offer strong leads, while a new initiative called Project Wild Thing (with the National Trust as lead partner) aims to "re-connect one million kids with nature".

TRUST INVOLVEMENT

For its part, the John Muir Trust is unequivocal in its aspiration for society to value its wild places. It promotes the John Muir Award as its primary (though by no means only) vehicle for connecting people and wild places. Over 160,000 Awards have been achieved since its launch in 1997 - reflecting, together with many other initiatives across the country, that there is already a significant 'movement' in place and that we don't necessarily need a universal kick-start as stated in Natural Childhood.

The Award increasingly reaches a wide age range. While 45% of the 23,000 participants involved in Award activity in 2011 were under 12 years of age, 13% were over 16, including a diverse range of volunteers, leaders and teachers. Meanwhile, the number of secondary schools getting involved through mainstream classes has doubled since 2010, and an increase in demand for Award Continuing Professional Development events supports wider anecdotal evidence of the uptake of outdoor learning approaches in secondary schools.

In addition, a Family Award created last year to encourage more, and better, inter-generational activity has been well received. As Orlando Rutter of Dartmoor National Park comments: "Our evaluations clearly show that children respond specifically to opportunities to explore, have fun, learn about wildlife and contribute through conservation tasks. Parents value the opportunity for interpersonal learning, both with their children and other adults. They are also often surprised at their own journeys, both cognitively and emotionally."

Finally, some 30% of Award take-up in 2011 (and at least 25% every year since 2001) was with 'social inclusion' audiences, and interest from Further Education Colleges and adult learners in Scotland has doubled during the past year. The structure of the Award accommodates the variables already highlighted by Geoff Cooper and creates

Flower power (left to right): smelling daffodils; a group from Saheliya enjoys time at Edinburgh's Redhall Walled Garden as part of a Green Team project

a context for active responsibility for wild places as an integrated part of an outdoor experience.

At archetypal and anecdotal levels, we know that a society disconnected from nature isn't a healthy society. There is "a wealth of reports to support our work in outdoor learning", says Geoff Cooper. And there is good evidence that contact with nature brings benefits to physical and mental health to some children and adults, confirms Professor Mitchell, whilst encouraging us to be "realistic and objective in both assessing and promoting what nature can do for us".

There's no doubt that we face a challenge to integrate connections with the outdoors with modern lifestyles, especially with young people. The Natural Childhood initiative, with its provocative terminology and young children focus, brings a welcome impetus to a wider debate. It encourages us to explore what works, to generate political support and highlight the many benefits that a stronger connection with our natural environment might offer each and every one of us. □

Further info

National Trust, Natural Childhood report
www.bit.ly/QloKs6

John Muir Award resources and links
www.jmt.org/jmaward-resources-links.asp

About the author

Rob Bushby is the Trust's John Muir Award Manager. He can be contacted at Rob.Bushby@jmt.org

Since Mountain Equipment began in 1961, we have been witness to an age of outstanding achievement and evolution in the history of climbing and mountaineering. We have also seen an equally dramatic increase in pressure on our wilderness mountain areas

Supporting the John Muir Trust as a corporate member is one of the key things that Mountain Equipment is doing to play its part in helping to ensure that those of us who love to experience adventures in the mountains will be able to continue to do so.

“At the heart of mountaineering lies a passion for living life to the full in wilderness mountain landscapes,” said Richard Woodall, Marketing Director at Mountain Equipment. “These landscapes are the fabric that mountain adventures are woven into and the very reason our business exists. The work that the John Muir Trust does is invaluable in helping to preserve the unique and precious parts of the world that are so important to us all.”

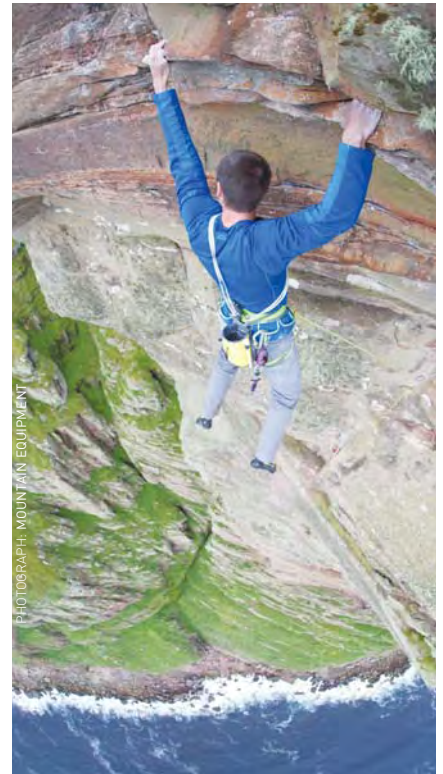
A British brand that has been making clothing and equipment for over fifty years, Mountain Equipment has supported many pioneers – including Sir Chris Bonnington, Doug Scott and Sir Ranulph Fiennes – on an array of landmark expeditions, including a

string of groundbreaking ascents on Everest, every British first ascent of an 8,000m peak and unsupported trips to both poles.

So many of these great achievements were conceived of, and prepared for, in the British mountains. The next generation of mountaineers will depend upon this landscape in the same way. This is why Mountain Equipment is a Gold Corporate Member and an enthusiastic supporter of the John Muir Trust.

→ www.mountain-equipment.co.uk

Mountain Equipment-supported climber Dave MacLeod approaches the top of the world's hardest sea cliff climb – the Long Hope route at St John's Head, Hoy



The John Muir Trust would like to thank Mountain Equipment and all our Corporate Members and Supporters, as well as those other companies who provide support such as payroll giving schemes

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We value the contribution of the growing number of companies that support the Trust through membership, donations, promotional initiatives and in-kind support. If your business would like to help our business of protecting wild land and wild places, please contact Fiona Mackintosh on 01796 484 970 or email fiona.mackintosh@jmt.org





PHOTOGRAPH: SWAP

Inspiring lives

Green fingers (clockwise from above): SWAP student Lucie in the wildlife garden created in the grounds of North Glasgow College; the group with Rhona Weir; Tom Weir on the Cobbler

Kim McIntosh sees how a John Muir Award based around the life of a Scottish mountaineering legend helped a group of adult students prepare for university education

INSPIRATION CAN COME in many forms. For a group of adult students from the Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) – an initiative that helps adults with few or no qualifications progress to higher education – it was a local man of the mountains that helped fire the imagination.

Studying on the Access to Science programme at North Glasgow College, Springburn, the students were preparing to progress to university courses in bio-sciences. Having participated in John Muir Award Leader Training with Scotland's Colleges, SWAP development officer, Lisa Marsili, chose to deliver a John Muir Award to bring a local dimension and structure to the students' spring term of activities.

Lisa was inspired by revered Scottish mountaineer and conservationist Tom Weir and wanted to share this with the students by following in his footsteps. "I was first inspired by Tom Weir through watching *Weir's Way* on late night TV in the 1990s; he had me hooked on his travels through Scotland's wild places," she recalls. "He inspired me to explore Scotland and learn about its culture and ecology, which is now one of the most rewarding parts of my life. I particularly admired Tom's modest, unassuming approach, which I feel enables his message to be accessible to all, regardless of age and culture."

Lisa used the framework of the Award's Four Challenges to help the students learn about conservation, develop teamwork and key skills, make a difference for biodiversity in Springburn, plus learn more about the cultural and natural history of the local area.



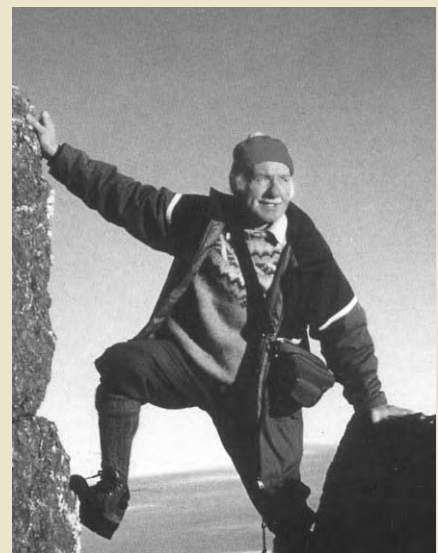
PHOTOGRAPH BY SWAP

▮ ABOUT TOM WEIR

Tom Weir was one of Scotland's best-loved conservationists, with his writing and broadcasting about the Scottish landscape, people and natural history inspiring generations of Scots.

Born in 1914, Tom spent his childhood in Springburn, an inner city district in the north of Glasgow with an industrial history based around the railways. His mother worked as a wagon painter in the Cowlairs locomotive works but would regularly leave the city with Tom and explore the Campsie Hills, just a short bus journey away. It was here that he was introduced to a lifetime of outdoor adventure. After service with the Royal Artillery in World War II, he worked for Ordnance Survey before becoming a professional climber, writer and photographer. In 1950, he was a member of the first post-war Himalayan expedition and later climbed in Greenland, Iran, Syria and Kurdistan. But it was the hills of Scotland that made him famous.

Tom hosted *Weir's Way*, wearing his trademark woolly hat and Fair Isle jumper, exploring the landscape and history of Scotland and meeting people along the way. In his later years, Tom and Rhona spent their married life in Gartocharn, Loch Lomond, where Tom famously climbed Duncryne Hill every day. Although he had climbed and walked extensively across Scotland and around the world, Tom reckoned Duncryne, locally known as the Dumpling, had the best view of any small hill in the country.



Here is how they met the Four Challenges:

Discover a wild place. The wild places were provided by green spaces in and around Tom Weir's two homes: Springburn and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. The students learned about Loch Lomond through watching *Weir's Way* episodes on the area while, over the course of a college term, they and staff spent time in the college grounds, Springburn Park and also visited Gartocharn and Duncryne Hill (known locally as the Dumpling). They even walked along the street where Tom spent his childhood.

Explore its wildness. As all the students in the group were preparing to study natural sciences at university, part of their Award was focussed on exploring the ecosystems in their wild places. They compared and contrasted the environments and, in particular, learned about non-native species around Loch Lomond. They were also encouraged to explore the human elements of being in nature. What does spending time in wild places mean for people? And what impact does time in nature have on us? The students knew about Tom Weir's love of exploring wild

places and wanted to understand more about why people enjoy and value time outdoors.

Conserve a wild place. To make a difference to wild places, the students created a wildflower garden within the grounds of North Glasgow College - work they hoped would help improve biodiversity in this urban area and provide habitats for wildlife, particularly pollinators. They were also keen to create an outdoor space for the college and a place where other students and staff could enjoy being in a natural environment.

Share your experiences. In preparation for university, the group learned how to write a scientific journal article and planned to create a piece about their Award for the Glasgow Biodiversity publication. Further sharing of their experiences came through representing SWAP at the North Glasgow College end of year party, and promoting their work and Award to potential students through a presentation and photo exhibition.

→ continued



PHOTOGRAPH: SWAP

ICING ON THE CAKE

When the John Muir Award Proposal Form, the paperwork required to register for the Award, first arrived at the Trust office, Award staff were impressed by the unique approach Lisa and the group had taken with their plans and the focus on Tom Weir. A keen supporter of the Trust, Tom was also the first person to be recognised with a John Muir Lifetime Achievement Award (one of only four in the Trust's 30-year history). His wife, Rhona, remains an active Trust member.

And we were not the only ones impressed by this approach. After discussing the SWAP group's Award at the John Muir Trust AGM in June, Rhona invited the students to visit her at home in Gartocharn and hear more about Tom's Lifetime Achievement Award for themselves. Delighted by the invitation, the group planned a day out in the National Park incorporating a walk up Duncryne Hill and a 'dialogue on the Dumpling' to discuss the importance of conservation and the need for time in wild places.

This was followed by lunch and an afternoon with Rhona who showed the group photos of Tom from different times in his life, including receiving his MBE (in 1976) and his John Muir Lifetime Achievement Award in 2000. "Tom always said the award he treasured more than any was the John Muir Trust Award," she told the group.

Later, Rhona recounted stories of Tom's expeditions in Nepal as well as sharing tales of their days climbing together in Scotland. She told how he loved producing *Weir's Way* and sharing his love for Scotland with others. Her passion for the outdoors also shone through as she took the group for a guided walk around the local area. She spoke of how Tom had been committed to the conservation of wild places and

his involvement in campaigning for National Parks in Scotland.

As well as stories from their lives, Rhona shared a few words of wisdom with the students - "live every day to the fullest, treat each day like it is the first day of the rest of your life". The afternoon ended with Rhona presenting the students and staff from SWAP with their John Muir Awards and congratulating them on their achievements.

"Rhona was so welcoming and looked after us well," said one of the group, Rachel Forbes. "It was awesome to meet her and she is doing a great job of carrying on Tom's work and legacy."

"It was fantastic to meet Rhona and be awarded our certificates by her," added Lisa. "We all thought that Rhona was such an inspiration - what a lady! It was fantastic to listen to Rhona's stories about her and Tom; however we were also fortunate to learn about Rhona herself. Being fond of adventures in the mountains myself, I particularly enjoyed hearing about her adventures with the Scottish Ladies Climbing Club, which she is still greatly involved in."

Coincidentally, the day that the SWAP group visited Gartocharn, Rhona received a letter from the National Park about the planned placement of a memorial to Tom within the Park - a timely reminder of Tom's importance to conservation in Scotland. It is an importance that will no doubt inspire many more Scots to enjoy and do something positive for wild places. □



PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

Loch Lomond views: group members during the 'discussion on the dumpling' (top); Tom and Rhona Weir at Tom's Lifetime Achievement Award presentation

About the author

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Wild land, wild woods

Mike Daniels recently visited Slovenia as part of an EU Nature Exchange programme and couldn't help but be struck by the country's extensive native woodland cover

HERE'S SOMETHING to ponder. What would wild land in the UK look like if nature had the upper hand? If natural vegetation was left to cloak our hills instead of heavily grazed grass and ceaselessly burnt heather? Some of our wild land would undoubtedly remain bare – the scree-covered slopes, wind-scoured summits and vast areas of moss and bird-rich blanket bog – but much would also be wooded. There would be fertile oak, aspen and willow riparian woodland in the glen bottoms, pine and birch on its sides, and juniper, dwarf birch and dwarf willow scrub growing up to the mountain summits.

In many ways, it is this native woodland, in all its forms, that is perhaps the best indicator of the health of our wild land. And while there are some encouraging signs, it is fair to say that in terms of wild land woodlands, the UK remains the sick man of Europe. As a country, we have one of the lowest percentages of woodland cover on the whole continent (see Classic text, p32). And much of the woodland we do have is non-native, or at best semi-natural, without the age structure and dead wood component of old growth forests found elsewhere. Incredibly, across the entire country, we only have 1km of natural tree line, and an entire ecosystem – montane scrub and its associated plant, insect and bird life – that is now virtually extinct.

But, perhaps at last, we are beginning to wake up to the value of our woodlands (as a recent consultation on the national forest in England highlighted), and the need for more of them (as a recent consultation on woodland expansion targets in Scotland suggested).

As a Trust, we aspire not just to any woodland, but to the full range of native woodland (including montane scrub) in a landscape-scale mosaic of wild land habitats, all governed by natural processes. We and other conservation-minded landowners are taking tentative steps to make this happen, where possible. Native trees and other natural vegetation are slowly beginning to re-claim the bare hills and glens of Abernethy, Corrie Dhorraicail, Creag Meagaidh, Glen Nevis

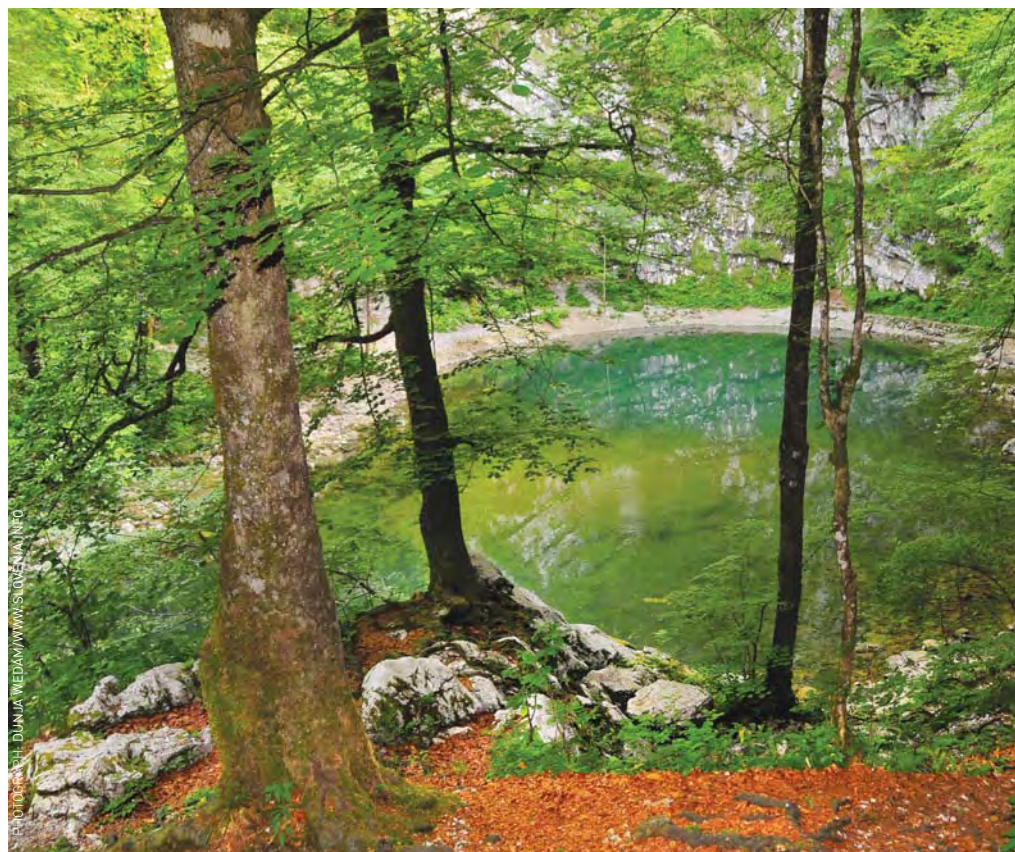
and Glenfeshie. Elsewhere, ambitious re-planting and re-wilding schemes are breathing new life into Carrifran, Dundreggan, Ennerdale and Glenlude to name a few. At present, however, these initiatives remain green beacons of light in an otherwise sterile, stunted landscape dominated by monocultures of sheep walk, deer 'forest', grouse moor and sitka spruce plantation.

TAKE ONE COUNTRY

As part of a European Union funded Nature Exchange, I was one of a group of six people from Scotland who were lucky enough to spend a week in the Karst region of southwest Slovenia in July – a visit that provided a glimpse of what extensive native wild land woodland cover might look like.

The contrast with back home was all-too stark. While Slovenia has a similar total area of woodland to Scotland (at 1.2 million hectares), it represents 60% of the land cover of the country (as opposed to 18% in Scotland) and consists of more than 90% native woodland (compared to less than 30% in Scotland).

Slovenia's woodland is home to virtually every European mammal species, including wolf, bear, lynx, wild boar and beaver, plus a staggering diversity of plants, birds and insects. Of course, there are many reasons for this biodiversity, from geography (the convergence of Alpine and Mediterranean zones) to geology (rich limestone) and climate. All, of course, are very different to that found in Scotland. But the fundamental



PHOTOGRAPH BY DUJANA WEDAN/WWW.SLOVENIA.INFO



PHOTOGRAPH: TOMO JESENIČNIK/WWW.SLOVENIA.INFO



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PHOTOGRAPH: KATRINA MARTIN

Slovenia green (clockwise from opposite): a wild lake in amongst the trees; a Slovene wood; colourful local wildlife; Grmečnik waterfall

→ continued



PHOTOGRAPH: KATRINA MARTIN



PHOTOGRAPH: KATRINA MARTIN

Land of trees: more than 60% of Slovenia is wooded (above); classic Karst scenery (left)

point is that a landscape-scale area dominated by native woodlands creates structural diversity and a home for a host of biodiversity long since gone from Scotland and the wider UK.

Culturally and socially there are many differences too, not least the political legacy of the former Yugoslavia, and patterns of land ownership. In terms of woodland management, there has been a long culture of low use protected (wild land) areas and sustainable use of other areas. Most of the forests we saw were under 'continuous cover systems' with either single trees or small groups felled every ten years. This brings an ecological continuity that in turn ensures the survival of woodland-dependent species – as opposed to the shock and awe clear felling regimes employed in the UK.

Consequently, there is little need for the engineering infrastructure associated with our industrialised forestry. The sheer scale of the seed source in Slovenia ensures natural regeneration is the main woodland creator. Mechanical mounding, spraying and planting is unnecessary, as are the need to cage trees individually or encircle large areas in six-foot-high deer fences.

And unlike in Scotland, where red deer densities commonly reach more than 20 deer per km², in Slovenia the range is more like 0.4–8 per km². Here, hunters are used to stalking in woodland cover with low deer densities, while the deer are also subject to other natural predators. Slovenian hunters must submit their management plans for state approval, as opposed to Scotland's 'voluntary principle' where the landowner decides how many deer are wanted regardless of the ecological implications.

MUCH TO DO

Will we ever reach a similar point at home? There is certainly a long way to go if we are to move from the current fragmented patches of semi-natural woodland to extensive areas of continuous native woodland and other habitats enjoyed by countries such as Slovenia. The Trust and others will continue to do what it can on the land it manages through ownership and partnership. Landscape-scale initiatives, such as the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape project, can also influence change at a larger scale, as can our continued contribution to

debates and consultations on woodland and deer management policies.

Ultimately, though, it will take a major shift in public (and political) attitudes before we see our own hills, so bare and bereft of biodiversity, restored to how they once were. □

Further info

The Nature Exchange programme was funded by the European Union's Leonardo Da Vinci programme and was organised by the Perthshire-based Arch Network and the Vitra Centre for Sustainable Development, Slovenia.

About the author

Mike Daniels is the Trust's head of land & science. He can be contacted at Mike.Daniels@jmt.org



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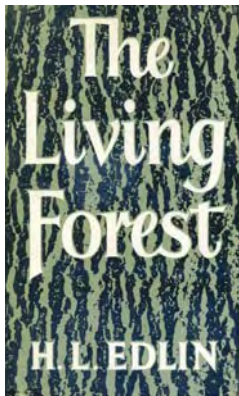


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The Living Forest, HL Edlin

Having first encountered it as a teenage tree-spotter, Mike Brown remembers a text that tells our own story as well as that of our woodlands

HERBERT EDLIN, OR 'HL Edlin' to use his more frequent *nom de plume*, was a prolific woodland writer whose range extended from forest management to woodworking crafts, from folklore to tree identification. I first stumbled upon a library copy of *The Living Forest* as an enthusiastic teenage tree-spotter intent on improving my identification skills, but quickly learned there was more to studying trees than – in Edlin's words – “stamen counting”.

The Living Forest is a rich synthesis of Edlin's many strands of woodland knowledge and enthusiasms, drawing on a score of disciplines, from place names and social history to botany and economics. Edlin tells the story of the trees as they slowly reclaimed the British Isles after the last Ice Age: the dwarf birches and willows taking root on the tundra as glaciers retreated, followed by birches, rowans and aspens until the last of the ‘natives’ made it across before the land bridge with the Continent was severed.

Then, he recounts the arrivals, by accident or design, for decoration or food or commerce, of subsequent species and the creation of our landscape today, with our woods, or lack of them. But his forest story is also a human story. Long before such views were commonly heard, he spelled out the interdependence, the creativity and the murderous destruction which people could bring to their woodland environment.



Fifty years before going out tree-planting with the John Muir Trust and reading up on deer policy, I was learning from Edlin of man's constant depletion of forest. Scafell, he points out, is the Norse *Skoga Fjell*, the forested mountain – one of many clues embedded in language scattered across the maps. And where now are the alders of Faferníe or the pines of Glen Geusachan? He describes how, over the centuries, deforestation became institutionalised in human activity. The *Domesday Book* defined the scale of a wood by the number of pigs it could support during ‘pannage’ – the custom of bringing pigs into oak woods to devour fallen acorns. “Pannage stands as a classic example of how to eliminate a forest,” says Edlin. “Cut off the seed supply – and wait.”

The Royal Forests were formed on tracts of land with commoners' grazing rights, and so were doomed. Eighteenth century painters recorded a landscape punctuated picturesquely with huge, aged trees. But they were freak survivors. The upright healthy specimens had long been taken by shipbuilders and sawyers, with those that remained left to illustrate the perverse rule of the survival of the unfittest. Their potential successors, in turn, had succumbed to the herds and flocks which complemented the artists' pastoral scenes. By such routes we came to ‘deer forest’ – that Orwellian euphemism for habitat devastation.

Edlin's historical sweep reveals woodlands, both coppiced and pollarded, hosting crafts and small industries and producing raw materials for a multitude of trades, many long obsolete. He provides a vivid snapshot of the role wood played in our lives half a century ago, whether in building vehicles or making musical instruments. Edlin is writing at the heyday of the conifer when three out of every four trees planted by the Forestry Commission were Sitka spruce, a very Scottish import from British Columbia: discovered by

Menzies, imported by Douglas and promoted on a large scale by Stirling Maxwell at Corrour. As a forester, Edlin expresses an enthusiasm for the species less often voiced today. But like all classics, *The Living Forest* reflects its time as well as having timeless appeal.

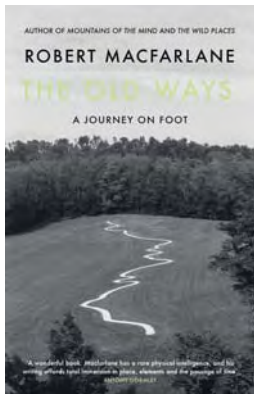
And then as a reader's treat, Edlin laces his erudition with an abundance of curiosities which, for a forager like myself, means my copy is well-thumbed. We may not need to know that the charcoal of alder buckthorn was the most favoured by gunpowder makers, but if that sort of nugget appeals to you then Edlin will also tell you that the Tannenbaum of the Christmas carol is the common European silver fir; Killiecrankie means ‘the wood of the aspen’; ginkgo is related to the trees which formed our coalfields; and sweet chestnuts are found near Roman sites because legionaries ground the nuts into a porridge. He also enjoys debunking popular ideas. Welsh archers did not use yew for their bows; elm was their wood of choice. □

Book details

The Living Forest was first published by Thames & Hudson in 1958 and is readily available secondhand.

The reviewer

Mike Brown is a Trustee of the John Muir Trust and a former editor of the Journal.



Robert Macfarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot*
Reviewed by Judith Wilson

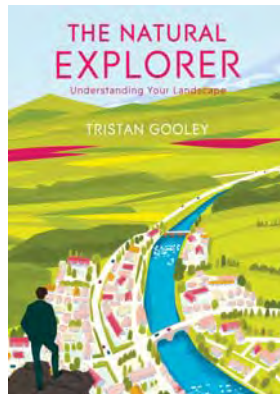
It is easy to condescend to paths: well-trodden, unambitious alternatives to the grandeur and solitude of wild places – “beaten paths for beaten men”. But humans are pathmakers, and our relationship with the world is a long negotiation between wilderness and mapping.

The Old Ways opens with the kind of unexceptional walk that most of us will recognise: along suburban streets, across a golf course. Macfarlane follows the trail onwards, exploring how walking even familiar paths grounds us in the world. Following the footfall of those who trod out the track before gives us bearings on where, and who, we are “for paths run through people as surely as they run through places”.

The Old Ways is ‘a journey on foot’, but it is one made up of a network of trails through space and time. Macfarlane walks the deep past of the Icknield Way and Formby Point. He is taken for a walk in Ramallah and experiences how walking may create a space for new understandings of a contested landscape; he learns to see a path of vanishing faintness on Lewis. He walks a pilgrim route in Tibet, and over the Lairig Ghru to his grandfather’s funeral.

Everywhere, paths are places of encounters: there are stories and conversations that reach back to prehistory in the shared experience of the journey. Macfarlane is attentive to qualities of terrain and atmosphere, alert to the particularities of geology and light, as well as to human character. In this wise and generous book, paths are not second-best to wilderness: they engage our imagination, returning to us the freedom that we share with the wild. Step out and follow the beaten track.

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The Natural Explorer, Understanding Your Landscape, Tristan Gooley
Reviewed by Rob Bushby

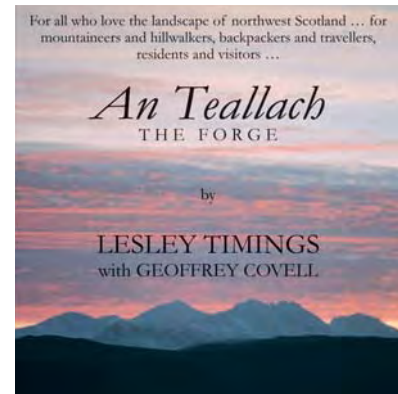
A strong premise of this engaging and stimulating book is the simple philosophy that “the explorer must do two things: make discoveries and communicate these to others”. As the only living person to have both flown solo and sailed single-handedly across the Atlantic, Gooley does have some modern day credibility in this area.

The Natural Explorer offers a companion piece to his popular first book, *The Natural Navigator*, and seeks to reclaim the term ‘explorer’ from its current “moribund” state. In terms very familiar to a Trust audience, he wants us to “return to the acts of discovering and sharing, on however modest a scale”.

To help us do so, there are short, themed chapters covering an array of topics from the specific (plants, weather) to the geographic (city, river, coast), the sensory (colour) and the aesthetic (beauty, imagination and wonder). These are punctuated with historic delving and anecdotes that are plentiful but necessarily, frustratingly, brief. This episodic format is a bit of a tease and leaves the reader wanting more from each chapter.

Historical and inspirational travellers enliven the book throughout. John Muir features in an extensive cast, with quotes to help interpret the sky, the landscape and our relationship with natural features. In a line that reflects the essence of *The Natural Explorer*, Gooley explains that “Muir became one of America’s most revered naturalists not because of the extraordinary things he saw, but because of his extraordinary desire to see things”.

Sceptre (an imprint of Hodder & Stoughton), £16.99 (hardback). Also available as an e-book.
www.hodder.co.uk
ISBN 978 1 444720334



An Teallach, The Forge, Lesley Timings with Geoffrey Covell
Reviewed by Richard Rowe

Given the scale and grandeur of the scenery in the northwest Highlands, it takes a special mountain to stand out above all others. But, for many, An Teallach – *the forge* or *the anvil* in Gaelic – does just that.

Rising from the waters of Little Loch Broom to a height of 1,062 metres, and with 11 individual peaks of Munro height along its five-kilometre ridge line, An Teallach is a formidable lump of Torridonian sandstone. Its scale, location and form – all sculpted ridges and bare-rock pinnacles and crags – have enticed mountaineers, explorers and photographers. All are drawn by a profound sense of wildness.

The mountain has certainly left a deep impression on the authors of this book who provide an intimate, season by season portrait that explores its rocky heart from every possible angle: its character and moods, ecology, social history and wider connection with the human spirit. And they are not alone in being captivated, as accounts from the likes of WH Murray, Seton Gordon and early mountain explorers testify.

The language reflects the extremes of the mountain itself – winter sees “gales drum the air over open spaces and against the mountain, thrashing An Teallach’s woodlands” – but the authors also cherish An Teallach’s softer sides: its wildlife and different hues of the seasons.

But in amongst the accounts of exploring the mountain’s summits, corries and airy ridges, it is Martin Moran, a mountaineer of current vintage, who perhaps puts it best, saying simply: “There are only a few special mountains whose aura shines more brightly after close acquaintance. An Teallach is one of them.”

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Sandwood seasons

Don O'Driscoll charts
another year in the natural
cycle at Sandwood

AUTUMN. 'SEASON OF MISTS and mellow fruitfulness.' "Yeah, right," I'm inclined to say. I doubt Keats was ever at Sandwood with the tail end of a hurricane blowing in off the Atlantic. But the waves are magnificent. So are the gannets that strike into them.

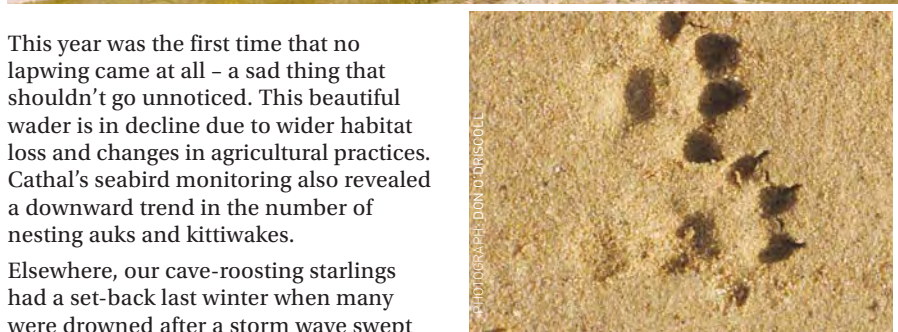
But what of the months just passed? The Sandwood path appeal has been a great success and, under the guidance of our new footpath project officer, Chris Goodman, and the herculean efforts of contractors Martin and Mark from Lochinver, the stretch of path around the banks of Loch a' Mhuillinn has now been redirected onto higher ground. Other sections have been resurfaced.

The work has been in line with the Trust's commitment to facilitate access to our properties and contain the damage done by paths braiding out onto the surrounding peatland. Our work has been appreciated by visitors, with many stopping to thank volunteers for their efforts.

This year I was given a couple of remote cameras, which I set up along otter trails and nearby holts. The cameras picked up images of the animals themselves, although their main purpose was for use on deer carcasses to see what was feeding on them. The results were unsurprising, but one photo really pleased me: it showed a young eagle mantling a carcass with a wary fox in the foreground and two ravens watching in the background like sextons at a funeral.

Then there are the little things, so easily missed: the miniature cliffside 'woods' of prostrate juniper, creeping willow and bonsai aspen; the ivy and burnet rose that cling to their steep, spray-lashed sanctuaries. A metaphor for tenacity. Smaller still, the grains of sand that, if seen through a hand lens, reveal a micro-world of fish bones, shells, shucks, carapace; a host of delicate shapes, textures and colours.

Bay of plenty: the broad expanse of Sandwood Bay, with Cape Wrath in the distance (top); otter tracks



This year was the first time that no lapwing came at all – a sad thing that shouldn't go unnoticed. This beautiful wader is in decline due to wider habitat loss and changes in agricultural practices. Cathal's seabird monitoring also revealed a downward trend in the number of nesting auks and kittiwakes.

Elsewhere, our cave-roosting starlings had a set-back last winter when many were drowned after a storm wave swept their roost at Droman. But it's not all bad news: they have enjoyed a good breeding season and numbers are back up. Their neighbours, the rock doves, are also thriving and keep the resident pair of peregrines well-fed.

Life on the moorland is quieter now, certainly compared with May and June when larks, pipits, golden plover, cuckoos, dunlin and red-throated divers are in full voice. But come September, it livens up again with the roaring of stags, skeins of geese overhead and, best of all, the wild swans – their bugling calls and flight filling the land and adding a sense of scale to the expanse of blanket bog.

Soon there will be activity in the burns as the compulsion to start new life draws salmon and trout from sea and loch up to their spawning redds. A quiet upstream approach to these places can sometimes reveal these amazing creatures, some coming to the end of an incredible journey.

Winter also has its own stark beauty. Sometimes, while out stalking with just the dogs for company, it's no hardship to know that there isn't another person for miles, and the only prints on Sandwood strand are those of birds, an otter, or a prospecting fox.

The seasons come and go, but the wonder never diminishes. It's a privilege to be part of it all. □

About the author

Don O'Driscoll is the Trust's conservation officer for Sandwood & Quinag. He can be contacted at don.odriscoll@jmt.org

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