

# Happenings at Glenlude

JOHN  
MUIR  
TRUST

## 2022 is a year of change and opportunity

The past couple of years have been tough for many so we were delighted that 2022 finally enabled us to re-establish our weekly Thursday work parties and welcome other groups back to Glenlude.

### Thursday volunteer work parties

Re-starting in March, after a break over the colder months, we have managed well over 25 Thursday work parties with 27 of our core volunteers giving over 155 days conservation work keeping the project moving forward at a steady pace. They reinforced 150m of brash hedging over two days in November and planted 300 trees in front of the cabin to reinstate the screen of larch that was removed. We have also removed many more shelters from the now established broadleaf trees – some of which have started producing seed.

All our footpaths were scythed as part of the Trust's commitment to reduce carbon emissions. Firewood has been processed and well-seasoned ensuring a good stock for selling over the winter months; and rear of the hut and north gable end have been repaired and reclad in locally sourced larch.

Returning to Glenlude after three years at SRUC, volunteer **Andrew Beverley** organised our second breeding bird survey (see page 3 for results) with the **Oatridge College Countryside Stewards (ORCS)**. Plans are in place for this to be an ongoing relationship providing students with an opportunity to gain valuable practical experience.

- [Read more in Andrew's blog online.](#)



Our second annual breeding bird survey

### Other visiting groups

Edinburgh-based youth engagement charity the **Green Team** returned for a two-day camping residential in March, during which they maintained their trees up on the hill at Green Team Wildwood.

**Phoenix Futures** service users also camped at Glenlude in April this year. They arrived the day before their annual tree planting event (first since Covid) to help prepare for the celebration. 200 native broadleaved trees were planted, further extending the Phoenix Forest, before we retired to the tree nursery for a celebratory lunch. We have been working with this substance rehabilitation charity for 10 years during which over 2,000 trees have been planted on behalf of and by the service users and staff from Phoenix Futures.

Phoenix Futures returned to camp again in September and helped us prepare for a visit by international delegates from the **European Federation of Therapeutic Communities Conference** that they were hosting this year in Glasgow. Ten international delegates visited Glenlude to learn more about our partnership with Phoenix Futures and its successful **Recovery through Nature** programme.

- [Read about the Phoenix Forest online.](#)

At the beginning of April, 267 trees were planted at **Jamie's Wood** by friends and family of the late Jamie Gardiner. The group of 21 also carried out maintenance on trees previously planted in that area of woodland.

- [Read more about Jamie's Wood online.](#)

The **Yorkshire Rewilding Network** came up for a day to learn about our work and get stuck into some tree maintenance at Jamie's Wood. Edinburgh-based travel company and corporate member of the Trust, **Absolute Escapes**, brought its entire staff over two days in the spring. They did some tree maintenance, built brash hedges and removed redundant fencing from the hill for recycling.

An Edinburgh office-based team from **Forest and Land Scotland** visited us for a day and – yes, you've guessed it – carried out more tree maintenance. This an activity that we do around all our fledging woodlands every year. It is essential for ensuring the success of these new native woodlands - and very therapeutic - so extremely valuable work!



**Pupils plant 120 trees on the hill**

**George Watson's College** was our final education group of the year. Five students

braved wintery conditions in early December to plant 120 oak and birch high on the hillside above the cabin, toasting marshmallows by the fire at lunchtime.

## More community engagement

### Forest operations

Responding to a Statutory Plant Health Notice issued by Scottish Forestry regarding diseased larch on site, we felled all 10 hectares of larch spread across the site before the deadline of 28 February 2022. The forestry company team that we engaged were happy to leave timber extraction until ground conditions improved (Glenlude is extremely wet). The team returned in March to remove the timber, completing the job in full by mid-May with minimum damage to the site.

One of the conditions of the contract was to create necessary extraction tracks to enable access to all eight larch compartments. These tracks will remain for future forestry operations until they are no longer needed. Then they will either be relandscaped or turned into footpaths to enable greater access to the site. The remaining brash was also gathered up into rows clearing the ground in readiness for replanting in due course.

Following on from the many visits by timber wagons to remove the timber from site, road repairs were required. A local contractor resurfaced 150m of track, created a turning circle to allow for easier access during future forestry operations, reinstated ditches, and cleared and installed culverts within a week in October.

“It was sad to see the larch go as it has a character of its own, it is valuable as a habitat and as timber if grown to a greater age. However, we are viewing it as an opportunity to push our site plans forward and create more tree planting events and tasks for our wonderful conservation volunteers.”



Ten hectares of felled larch creates opportunities

## Glenlude Gathering Shelter

After being held up by Covid, plans have been finalised for our all-access Gathering Shelter at Glenlude. This multi-purpose outdoor structure will enable us to engage with a more diverse range of groups, abilities and faiths.

Site preparations are under way for the foundations, and our aim is to start building in the spring using home-grown larch for cladding, sarking and roofing shingles as much as possible.

At our final work party of the year took place on Thursday 8 December. Volunteers started clearing the site following recent felling work by a tree surgeon. They built the branches into the nursery boundary brush hedge and started work on the new side access gate.

A festive lunch finished off our activity year with a lot of laughter and smiles – big thanks to John C for the entertainment!

## Biodiversity

**SRUC Oatridge College ORCS** carried out our second annual breeding bird survey, with the first being carried out by Glenlude Conservation Officer Sarah. While the numbers of species remained at 30 as per 2021, there were fluctuations across the species. Crossbill and cuckoo were recorded for the first time and bullfinch made a welcome return having previously been recorded in 2017. Skylark, meadow pipit and willow warbler numbers dropped, but it was a damp day, so we did wonder if that had affected numbers

recorded. It was another good year for wren with numbers up to 39 from 35 breeding pairs and robin made a comeback from 10 last year to 25.

## Other news

In May Glenlude Conservation Office Sarah Livingstone left us for pastures new. Initially joining us as an apprentice, Sarah spent three years working with groups of volunteers and supporting our work at Glenlude. We wish her well in her new venture.

September saw us hosting a stall at the second **Golden Eagle Festival** in Moffat. Bringing together local conservation groups, other community groups and a real golden eagle, this family friendly community event continues to build on from the success of last year's festival organised by the very successful South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project team.

We replaced 1.5km of boundary fence in November after countless repairs by our volunteers over the past 10 years. Working in partnership with our neighbours on **Mountbenger Farm** we engaged a local fencing contractor to undertake the task. It took a week to complete and, as well as replacing the fence, they removed all the old wire fencing from the hill. This will now be recycled or used to reinforce existing fences.

## Next steps

2023 will see us continue replant the clear-felled areas with a rich mix of native broadleaved trees and shrubs, creating more opportunities for volunteering at Glenlude. We will start building the Gathering Shelter and propagate another generation of trees in our tree nursery, along with all the other seasonal tasks that keep things moving forward. Keep an eye on our website for opportunities.

Finally, an enormous thank you to everyone who has supported us over the past year.

- Find out more about [Glenlude online](#).