

# Happenings at Glenlude



## 2025: A year of growth and celebration

Glenlude Manager Karen Purvis and Conservation Officer Ellie Oakley share a summary of some of the many highlights and happenings of the past 12 months at Glenlude.

### Volunteer work parties

#### Core volunteers

Glenlude opened again end of February for our regular Thursday work parties. This year we held 19 work parties, with 27 of our core volunteers giving up a total of 111 conservation days.

We have focused on essential tree maintenance in our young woodlands, straightened stakes, meshed and replaced lost saplings. We even managed to free a few trees by removing tree guards, especially in the thriving Phoenix Forest.

In addition to our regular volunteers helping with conservation tasks, we also created a 35-metre board walk on the way to Phoenix Forest and replaced the steps and a short section of path to the hut. All thanks to our extremely



skilled volunteer David leading on these.

Our final work party of 2025 took place on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December, where we were able to tidy up the site ready for Glenlude to “close down” for the winter, removing tree guards, taking mesh off the trees and doing maintenance around Sheila Bells grave, and removing wire off the hill ready to be recycled. We all shared a cosy lunch in the hut by the fire, before the games commenced led by our games master and designer, John.



#### Other visiting groups

This year we were delighted to host the **Green Team** for their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Around 40 people joined us in early October to plant more trees in their Wild Wood, which was created 10 years ago. They managed to plant 216 native trees and enjoy a soup and

cake lunch at the end. We worked with the Green Team 5 times this year and are looking forward to working with them again in 2026.



The **Jamies Wood** team returned in April to plant another 150 trees and carry out essential maintenance; we were delighted to be able to remove some of the tree guards from the first trees planted back in 2020 in this area. A couple of weeks later, we welcomed 70 people from **Phoenix Futures** to continue adding to their celebratory woodlands. We are now seeing that woodland which was planted 13 years ago is now producing seed. People travelled from Fife, Glasgow, Derbyshire and Ayrshire to plant 325 trees.

#### [Springtime boost at Glenlude](#)



Photo: Nicky McClure

Our corporate members, **Absolute Escapes**, joined us for two days removing tree guards in Phoenix Forest and completed much needed tree maintenance on the south side of the property. **Bright Green Nature**, a local conservation charity also brought Young Rewilders and Junior Ranger groups to Glenlude for a session of bracken bashing

around our newly planted trees to reduce the competition for light and reduce smothering.

This year 77 students over 8 sessions from **Portobello High School** participated in an overnight outdoor education program. For 60% of the participants this was their first experience of wild camping.

We are aware that not everyone knows about or is able to get to Glenlude, so we took Glenlude to the **Peebles Wood Market** and the **Kirkhope Mill** open studios day. We were able to engage with around 150 people over the two events. Some of our enthusiastic regular volunteers came along to share their love and knowledge about what Glenlude has to offer and why it is a special place. Thanks to our passionate volunteers we even picked up some new volunteers along the way.



Photo: Ailsa Colquhoun

### Wildlife and monitoring

This year at Glenlude we surveyed for adders, breeding birds, dwarf shrub heath, marked seedlings, butterflies and red squirrels.

As the weather started getting slightly warmer our first surveys of the year were adders. 10 individual adders were recorded, which is showing stable numbers to previous years.

#### [Field Notes: A commensalism friendship](#)

Monitoring red squirrels picked up again, after they were last surveyed for in 2019. Four feeding boxes were put up across the site, with sticky pads on the lids so we can tell if we had



red squirrels on site and which type of squirrel was feeding. Three out of the four feeders had red squirrel hair on them, but even better news none of the boxes had grey squirrel hair on them.



^ In the summer we were able to purchase four trail cameras, so this will make surveying red squirrels much easier, and we will be able to see what other wildlife is using our site, enabling us to continue to grow our wildlife records. Watch this space for more trail camera footage in 2026!

Another successful Breeding Bird Survey was completed. Ten years on and 62 different species of birds have been recorded on site. 32 species of the birds recorded are declining across the UK due to habitat loss, changes in land management and climate change. The majority of those birds actively benefit from the woodland creation and positive habitat changes on site. This year we recorded double the number of Goldcrests than last year, we also saw rise in numbers in goldfinches, meadow pipits and skylarks compared to previous years. The highlight of the surveys was watching 8 male black grouse lekking on the neighbouring estate, with two of the males seen moving onto the shoulder of Glenlude Hill. We have been working very closely with RSPB discussing how to be support local black grouse populations and make positive management decisions so numbers can continue to grow.

If you cast your mind back to the absolute scorcher of a summer, hard to do when we are well into winter. We had endless sunshine, although a worrying time for our newly planted trees it was perfect weather conditions for butterflies. 12 small pearl bordered fritillary were recorded, a species which is locally declining. We have partnered up conservation charity **Butterfly Conservation** to be apart of a borders wide project to monitor, manage and support butterflies. This project is specifically designed for the Northern Brown Argus; however, many other butterflies, bees, insects and birds will also benefit from this partnership.



^ The food plant of Northern Brown Argus caterpillars is **rock rose**, which we have small patches of on site. Some of our volunteers helped planted some rock rose plug plants in effort to increase these dwindling patches.

We also had three species of butterflies, never recorded on site before: Green Hairstreak, Large Skipper, and Brimstone Butterfly.

[Field Notes: Nature recovers at Glenlude](#)



**Green Hair Streak Butterfly**

Photos: Ellie Oakley

## Other news

### A warm welcome to Glenlude Conservation Officer, Ellie Oakley



Photo: Karen Purvis

In February we were delighted welcome Ellie Oakley to the team at Glenlude. Ellie's extensive experience as a Ranger and in community engagement fits in well at Glenlude and the wider Trust. Ellie has settled in well and taken over

responsibility for the Engagement work at Glenlude which she continues to grow and develop including our pilot Junior Rangers Programme.

[Field Notes: Autumn tasks at Glenlude](#)

### Nature of Scotland Health & Wellbeing Award

In November we were delighted to receive a **2025 Nature of Scotland Health & Wellbeing Award** for our partnership work with UK-wide rehabilitation charity **Phoenix Futures**. Since 2012, we have been working alongside Phoenix Futures staff and volunteers to create the Phoenix Forest as part of their Recovery Through Nature Programme; planting a tree for every participant who successfully completes their recovery programme. We have planted well over 2,500 trees in the woodland, which is now joining on to existing mature woodland thus further developing wildlife corridors.

The ceremony was hosted by BBC Springwatch presenter Iolo Williams and BBC Scotland Landward presenter Arlene Stuart. A short film about the project can be found here:

[Glenlude partnership wins Nature of Scotland Award 2025](#)



Photo: Mike Wilkinson ([www.mike-wilkinson.com](http://www.mike-wilkinson.com))

^ Karen receiving the 2025 Nature of Scotland Health & Wellbeing Award with colleagues from Phoenix Futures.



Photo: Karen Purvis

^ Phoenix Forest linking in nicely to mature woodland at Glenlude

## Looking forward to 2026

We are excited to be working in partnership with **Butterfly Conservation** to protect and manage our grassland habitats and also with the **Tree Council** to further develop our tree nursery.

Teams from **Jamie's Wood** and **Phoenix Futures** will be visiting again in the spring to further celebrate and nurture their woodlands.

**Portobello High School** students look forward to more camping experiences at Glenlude.

Come spring we will start our surveys for red squirrels, breeding birds, adders and butterflies. Summer will see us undertaking flora surveys, all of which help us gauge the progress of our work to regenerate Glenlude and shape the future management of the site.



Work on our **Gathering Shelter** build will commence, and we look forward to improving access to Glenlude so that we can welcome a wider audience to learn and enjoy wild land experiences. This will include the creation of easy access paths and raised beds in the tree nursery and around the Gathering Shelter.

We will continue to work closely with **RSPB** to **improve Glenlude habitats for black grouse**.

With support from **Developing Young Workforce** connecting us with local high schools, we will be running the pilot of our **Junior Rangers Programme** - an outdoor learning programme and award for young people delivered by local people who work in the outdoors. Established on our Nevis property for several years, Junior Rangers aims to inspire local young people to connect with, enjoy and care for our local environment, while helping to protect and enhance it. The aim is to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to progress employment within the green economy: from estate workers and land managers to biological recording, visitor information services and environmental education.

## And finally...

**During 2025, 222 incredible volunteers have given us 315 valuable days of conservation work.** We could not achieve the amount of work and progress we have made without our volunteers, partners and groups.

A huge thank you for all the work you have all put in this year. With plans already made for the new year, we will be back with an exciting volunteering programme in 2026.

Karen & Ellie



Photo: Toby Clark