

Report on 2012 Conservation Work Parties Programme

(The 2012 programme was supported by a financial grant from the Cruden Foundation Limited and other contributions.)

Members and non-members can join our conservation work parties. They take place on John Muir Trust properties and on our partnership properties.

Participants arrange their own food, travel and accommodation.

These events are designed to enable our members and others to:

- Contribute to the practical work of the John Muir Trust on Trust and partnership properties;
- Learn about the John Muir Trust and partnership properties and how they are managed
- Practice some of the skills of conservation management
- Meet other members and John Muir Trust staff

- Experience and have contact with wild places.

"Do something for wildness and make the mountains glad"
(John Muir, 1892)

Overview

In 2012 there were 29 organised work parties, plus a wide range of volunteering by individuals and groups such as the John Muir Trust local members groups. These were carried out mostly on Trust properties, but visits were also made to partners and like-minded properties as far away as Iceland.

The number of work days achieved in the main programme was up by around 11 per cent on last year, but when other voluntary work carried out on Trust properties is included, the increase is nearer to 15 per cent. This amounted to almost 800 days volunteering being donated by 150 different people in the main programme. That figure excludes the volunteering done by John Muir Award participants on Trust properties, and by Trust volunteers with their local groups away from Trust properties.

On average each work party had around eleven people on it, but due to the informal way that they are run (people look after their own travel & accommodation) people do drop in and out, usually to fit in hill walks or bags!

Highlights

The highlights of 2012 included:

- All the achievements at Glenlude in the Scottish Borders, where the infrastructure has been put in by volunteers to develop it as a centre for education and volunteering
- Use of the new Trust boat to bring volunteers into Li and Coire Dhorrcail as well as to pick up rubbish collected by volunteers on Camasunary beach

- The first work party to be held on Tanera Mor (who are part of the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape project).

We ran 29 work parties in 2012 (compared to 25 in 2011), with a further two cancelled due to bad weather and low number of potential volunteers.

As always, volunteers carried out a wide range of tasks matched to the conservation needs of each property.

Path work

This was boosted in 2012 by the presence of Chris Goodman, the new JMT paths project officer, who came along on many of this year's work parties. Path work carried out included:

- Maintenance and repairs to over 10km of paths on East Schiehallion, Sandwood, Quinag, Mam Li, Coire Dhorrcail, Corroul, Tanera Mor, Cravadale and at Skalanes in East Iceland.
- Digging over 2.5km of ditches
- Building at least 17 cross drains, 21 waterbars and 5 anchor bars, with all the accompanying landscaping.

Rubbish collection

This was carried both on beaches and inland, and included:

- Five helibags from Luskentyre on Harris
- Ten helibags from Camasunary on Skye
- One helibag at Miavaig on Harris
- Twelve bin bags from Ben Nevis
- Four bin bags from Treigside on the Corroul Estate.

The most satisfying finding for 2012 was the drastic reduction in rubbish collected this year from the summit of Ben Nevis.

Fences and walls

This type of work included:

- Removing over five km of redundant fences and fencing materials removed from; Luskenyre on Harris, Coire Dhorrcail on Knoydart and Glenlude in the Borders
- Erecting of around one km of new fencing on Tanera Mor in the Summer Isles and Glenlude to control sheep grazing
- Repairing dyking walls at Glenlude and Tanera Mor, and at the Tanera Mor quayside, Tigh an Quay (made famous in Frank Fraser Darlings *Island Farm* book).

Tackling invasive species

The targets included rhododendrons, gunnera, variegated yellow archangel and cotoneaster.

Regenerating woodland

Woodland regeneration activity included:

- Planting 1500 broadleaf trees on our East Schiehallion neighbour, Dun Coillich
- Constructing brash hedges and lengthening tubes with mesh extensions to rescue around 600 tube-bound trees at Glenlude, which had been held in check by deer browsing.
- Removing 1,000 to 1,500 redundant or failed tree tubes at Glenlude.
- Coppicing several areas of wood on Tannera Mor.

Improving the infrastructure at Glenlude

Some of the infrastructure improvements we carried out at Glenlude included:

- Building a composting toilet, a tool store, a wood store and a tree nursery
- Making improvements to the volunteers' shelter
- Creating new paths to connect the car parking
- Developing a group wild camping site in a former stall.

Other activities

Some other activities included helping with the community garden, and digging a toilet in the Long Beach campsite, in Inverie Knoydart; spot turfing the old path line on Schiehallion; and relandscaping an old ATV track on Quinag.

You can view a full report of each work party, including photographs, via the links in the table at the foot of the page.

About our volunteers

The John Muir Trust is lucky in having a dedicated group of volunteers, many of whom keep coming back every year. In 2012 we had over 150 different people volunteering, of whom at least 70 per cent were members of the Trust. Of the members, 79 per cent had been members for some time, while 21 per cent were new members of the Trust, having joined in either 2011 or 2012.

By gender, volunteers were split 63 per cent male and 37 per cent female (although the women actually accounted for 40 per cent of the total number of days attended). Volunteers came from all

over: 72 per cent from Scotland, 25 per cent from England, 1 per cent from Wales and 2 per cent from overseas.

Time spent

In total, 800 volunteer days were donated in the main programme of work parties. The breakdown of time spent is as follows:

- 18 per cent of the volunteers came for one day
- 54 per cent came for 2-5 days
- 16 per cent for 6-10 days
- 5 per cent for 11-16 days
- 6 per cent came for more than 17 days.

Age

We don't ask people their ages but at one work party in Harris this year, out of ten volunteers every age group from twenties to seventies was represented.

This spread of ages is not an unusual occurrence. Under 18's have to be accompanied on the work parties (making them unsuitable for Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award residential qualifications), but several parents did bring their children along during 2012.

Glenlude

The biggest development during 2012 was the large amount of work done by volunteers to develop the Scottish Borders estate into its role as a centre for education and volunteering.

As well as around 170 days of volunteer work during the eight organised work parties on the estate, volunteers also gave another 60 plus days. These came during work parties organised by the Borders JMT members group as well as individuals coming to Glenlude to help the ranger, Karen, on other occasions.

A huge amount of work has made a considerable improvement to the infrastructure as well as a solid start to the woodland and other changes planned for Glenlude during its rewilding.

Members groups and others

During 2012 several of the JMT members group were active carrying out practical conservation work. The work by the Borders Group at Glenlude co-ordinated by John Thomas is mentioned above. They have regularly attracted members from all over the Borders and even some from Edinburgh to come along.

In the North East of Scotland, James Brownhill and Rohan Beyts organised monthly work parties at Glen Tanar as well as two visits to beach cleans on Forvie Sands. Around 15 Trust members have attended at least one of the Glen Tanar work parties and half a dozen more went on the beach cleans. At Glen Tanar, work has included plant habitat improvement, pathwork and coppicing. A gift of £400 collected at one of the volunteers 70th birthday party has been used to buy tools for the group.

The Yorkshire members group, co-ordinated by John Page, met twice for weekends of conservation work with the Yorkshire Dales National Park (a partnership that has been ongoing for ten years now). Work included path construction and maintenance, dry stone walling, fencing, tree planting, willow spiling and signage work. Some Trust members also help out with the Raydale Trust and the Yorkshire Rivers Trust.

Seven volunteers from the Glasgow members group returned to the community-owned Isle of Gigha for their third annual visit in May 2012. Over a weekend they helped with dyking, tree planting and beach cleaning. Heather Willimott is organising another visit in May 2013.

We have used fewer volunteers for tree regeneration monitoring on all Trust properties this year, as the programme moves onto a rolling basis with each transect recorded once in three years. Other monitoring did occur in 2012 involving volunteers on Skye, Nevis, East Schiehallion and Glenlude. Volunteers have been involved with recording heath plots, butterfly transects, water vole surveys, flush plots and even dung transects to monitor roe deer numbers.

Looking forward to 2013

Bookings are already coming in for our 2013 programme of work parties.

At Glenlude, the flexible approach to volunteering which was developed during 2012 will be continued. As well as the work parties advertised in the main programme a pool of around 50 volunteers are approached on an ad hoc basis to help out during the rest of the year. These are largely contacted through an email list or the Borders members group, but wherever possible planned days are advertised on the Trust website for anyone to join in.

Other members group dates and volunteering opportunities with allied groups such as the Friends of Nevis, Knoydart Foundation, Highland Perthshire Community Land Trust (owners of Dun Coillich) and Carrifran Wildwood will be publicised on our website.

In addition, an ad hoc emailing about volunteering within the Trust goes out several times during the year to a list of over 600 past and future volunteers.

If you wish to join this list please email Sandy Maxwell the JMT work party co-ordinator on workparties@jmt.org or phone him on 0141 576 6663.

| dates of work 2012 | location | possible tasks - this will probably be updated closer to the start time but is always changeable due to weather and the requirements at each property | notes/reports |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 25 Feb | Glenlude | fence removal & building | see report |
| 10-11 Mar | Glenlude | woodland and walling | see report |
| 18 Mar | E Schiehallion | path maintenance | see report |
| 3-9 Apr | Glenlude | woodland and general | see report |
| 13-16 Apr | Li & Coire Dhorrcail (Knoydart) | pathwork and general | see report |
| 27-30 Apr | E Schiehallion | path repairs and fence removal | see report |
| 8-13 May | Inverie (Knoydart) | fence removal, pathwork and beach cleaning | see report |
| 14-16 May | Li & Coire Dhorrcail (Knoydart) | pathwork and general | see report |
| 19 May | Ben Nevis | path maintenance and summit rubbish cleanup | This work party has been cancelled |
| 26-27 May | Quinag | path maintenance | see report |
| 28 May-1 Jun | North & West Harris | paths in North Harris, beach cleaning at Luskentyre and general work including tree nursery near Tarbert | see report |
| 8-11 Jun | Glenlude | establishing a tree nursery | see report |
| 18-22 Jun | Corrour | paths, rubbish clean and woodland work | see report |
| 23 Jun | Ben Nevis | summit rubbish clean | see report |
| 1 Jul | E Schiehallion | path maintenance | see report |
| 6-9 Jul | Skye | general paths and woodland largely based around Sconser | see report |
| 14-15 Jul | Glen Nevis | monitoring, pathwork and fences | see report |
| 2-4 Aug | Sandwood | paths and beaches | see report |
| 5-6 Aug | Quinag | restoring ATV tracks | see report |
| 11 Aug | E Schiehallion | path maintenance | see report |
| 18 Aug | Ben Nevis | summit rubbish clean | see report |
| 24-27 Aug | Glenlude | general | see report |
| 10-14 Sep | Harris & Lewis | paths, beach cleaning | see report |
| 15 Sep | Ben Nevis | summit rubbish clean | cancelled due to weather |
| 17-21 Sep | Skàlanes (E Iceland) | pathwork & general | see report |

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| 21-24 Sep | Skye | Beach cleaning at Camasunary and Glen Scaladal | see report |
| 30 Sep | E Schiehallion | path maintenance | see report |
| 8-12 Oct | Tanera Mor (Summer Isles) | beaches, fences, paths and drystone dyking | see report |
| 19-22 Oct | Glenlude | general | see report |
| 10 & 11th Nov | Glenlude | general | extended to include Sunday |
| 2 Dec | Glenlude | general | |