

2013 Conservation Work Party Report

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 2013 there were 26 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.

The number of work days achieved in the main programme was up by around 5 per cent on last year, but when other voluntary work carried out on Trust properties is included, the increase is nearer to 10 per cent. This amounted to 839 days volunteering being donated by 151 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. It also doesn't include the ad hoc volunteering carried out at Glenlude. Here there were 265 days of volunteering which was 75 per cent as part of the main programme 14 per cent ad hoc days with the pool of regular volunteers and 11 per cent carried out by the local members group from the Borders.

On average each work party had around 12 people on it, but due to the informal way that they are run (people look after their own travel and accommodation) people do drop in and out, usually to fit in hill walks or bags!

Highlights

The highlights of 2013 included:

- the first work party aimed at families, held at Glenlude the RSPB helped to build and install bird boxes
- increased working with our partners in the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape (CALL) project. We have worked with the Assynt Foundation and Tanera Mor before, but this year over three work parties we also helped at the Culag Community Woodland and with the CALL tree nursery.

As always, volunteers carried out a wide range of tasks matched to the conservation needs of each property with all the old favorite tasks included and a few new skills attempted such as seed collecting and ring barking Sitka spruce!

Path work

Path work carried out included:

- maintenance and repairs to over 19 km of paths on East Schiehallion, Ben Nevis, Glen Nevis, Sandwood, Quinag, Mam Li, Coire Dhorrcail, Corrou (Road to the Isles), Tanera Mor, Huishinis/Cravadale, Urgha/Maaruig and Urgha/Rhenigidale
- digging over 6 km of ditches
- building at least 25 cross drains, 15 waterbars and 15 anchor bars, with all the accompanying landscaping.
- producing a [photo survey of the old line of the path](#) at East Schiehallion 10 years after restoration work started on it.

Rubbish collection

This was carried both on beaches and inland, and included the equivalent of:

- 4 helibags on Harris from Cravadal, Traigh Mheillin and Huishinis
- 5 helibags from Camasunary and Glen Scaladal on Skye
- 1 helibag on Tanera Mor
- 17 bin bags from Ben Nevis
- 3 bin bags from Treigside on the Corrou Estate.

Fences and walls

This type of work included:

- over 6 km of redundant fences and fencing materials removed from;, Quinag, Coire Dhorrcail on Knoydart, Glen Nevis and Glenlude in the Borders
- erecting of around 1 km of new fencing on Strathaird, Tanera Mor in the Summer Isles and Glenlude to control sheep grazing
- repairing dyking walls at Glenlude and Tanera Mor.

Tackling invasive species

The targets included rhododendrons, gunnera, variegated yellow archangel and cotoneaster. Whin (Gorse) was removed on the farm at Strathaird to improve grazing and at Glencanisp Lodge to open up walkers' paths.

Regenerating woodland

Woodland regeneration activity included:

- planting over 1,000 broadleaf trees on Glenlude
- constructing 3 brush hedges and lengthening tubes with mesh extensions to rescue around 400 tube-bound trees at Glenlude, which had been held in check by deer browsing

- brashing and removing conifers on Glenlude and at Culag Woodland including ring barking
- riparian willow planting on Sandwood estate
- collecting seed for the CALL tree nursery around Lochinver also at Glenlude for a new tree nursery that is being established there.

Improving the infrastructure at Glenlude

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

- following a fundraising campaign work has started to build a poly tunnel and establish a tree nursery
- making improvements to the volunteers' shelter including solar panels and a wood burning stove
- testing an old borehole to supply irrigation to the tree nursery
- extending the group wild camping site in a former stall.

Other activities

Some other activities included turfing the roof of a composting toilet at the Long Beach Campsite in Inverie Knoydart; excavating an old building on Tanera Mor to be developed as a bothy; and various bits of monitoring.

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 2013 the mix remained similar to previous years (there is a breakdown in last years report).

Members groups and others

During 2013 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 donating almost thirty days of work.

In the **North East of Scotland**, James Brownhill and Rohan Beyts organised monthly work parties at Glen Tanar within the Cairngorms National Park. The parties, consisting on average of around 6 volunteers, normally run routinely every under the guidance of Head Ranger, Eric Baird. In 2013 they undertook a variety of tasks including the replacement, repair and removal of tree tubes on plantings spanning many years at locations throughout the Glen. Where necessary some minor infill planting was performed. A wet day in spring witnessed black grouse displaying at their "lek" before the task of tying blue poly rope on the wires of a new stock fence in order to make it more visible to the grouse and avoid casualties. About 1 km of completely redundant chicken wire fence was removed alongside one of the Glen's more popular short walks and this major task was assisted by a group of 15 Junior Rangers joining the regular John Muir Trust volunteers in September.

For the first year the JMT group were invited by Shaila Rao, Ecologist at the NTS property **Mar Lodge** on the edge of the southern Cairngorms, to provide assistance. Three two-day events were held, in spring planting experimental grids of 30cm tree plugs at altitudes of over 500m where deer numbers have been significantly reduced in the last few years. The summer event was tough work scarifying the ground of heather and growth in order to give seeds from the existing natural Scots pine a better chance to naturally regenerate. Both these experiments will be closely monitored over the coming years.

The **Glasgow and West of Scotland** group returned to Gigha in May. Their tasks were organised by Malcolm McLaughlin, head gardener at Achamore Gardens. With the help of him and his staff they cleared an large area of unsightly rhododendron and several large trees which had blown down at the popular high point of the gardens overlooking the isles of Islay and Jura. Three large bonfires ate up the debris despite the heavy rain and visitors can now safely enjoy more of the superb views.

In 2013 the **Yorkshire** group had two weekends of activity. The first was in February when they coppiced willow that they had planted several years earlier in Wensleydale and used it to help prevent further landslips in the same area. In late August they returned to Muker in Swaledale to clear a slabbed path of overgrown turf that they had cleared ten years earlier and to also undertake some drainage work on a nearby path.

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. Several members have also helped with the Friends of Nevis work parties on rubbish clearing and path work around Nevis.

Looking forward to 2014

Bookings are already coming in for our 2014 programme of work parties.

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.

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.

<i>Property</i>	<i>dates</i>	<i>people</i>	<i>days</i>	<i>tasks</i>
1Glenlude	15-18 Feb	28	56	larch brash hedge, 500 birch hawthorn dog rose & willow planted 400 tubes extended solar panel, work bench chimney for stove
2Glenlude	12-14 Apr	11	18	thin larch in front of centre plant 200 birch & hawthorn, 6th brash hedge built, tool maintenance
3Corrour	22-26 Apr	13	59	Road to the Isles path worked on; ditches, culverts surface landscaping, rubbish Treigside
4Li & Coire Dhorrcail	26-29 Apr	5	18	fence check, removal fencing previously dismantled, path

				maintenance rhoddie seedlings, dug out noost	
5	East Schiehallion	05-May	15	15	path maintenance spot turfing on old line
6	Knoydart Foundation - Inverie	6-11 May	8	43	camp at Follach Mam Li path & fence removal , turf toilet roof
7	Glenlude	11-May	11	11	family work party building bird boxes with RSPB
8	Sandwood	16-18 May	17	46	path work & rubbish from all beaches, moorland bird survey riparian planting willow
9	Western Isles	20-24 May	13	56	gunnera removal, Maaraig Urgha Rhenigadale paths 5.5 km 1km ditches several culverts cleared With West Harris marram grass & beach festival prep
10	Ben Nevis	26-May	2	2	6 bags rubbish from summt
11	Skye	31 May-3 Jun	5	12	beach cleans Camasunary & Glen Scaladal, Blaven path maintenance fence repair at farm
12	East Schiehallion	09-Jun	6	6	path maintenance and cairn removal
13	Quinag & CALL	10-15 Jun	12	53	Quinag path maintenance and extend light touch work above stalkers path, 2 days on Suilven path, Culag woodland thinning, Wych elm seed collect & help at nursery
14	Glenlude	21-Jun	7	10	Tree extensions, brashing and weeding of tree tubes
15	East Schiehallion	14-Jul	13	13	maintenance and photos of old path line
16	Glen Nevis	19-21 Jul	13	48	voles & butterfly monitoring, fence removal 50 foot path built by river
17	Quinag & CALL	9-12 Aug	7	28	gorse at Glencanisp, sitka on Culag, 900 metres of old fence on Quinag removed, CALL nursery create hardening off area
18	Sandwood	22-24 Aug	16	60	half path (10 cross drains & ditching) half beach cleaning
19	Ben Nevis	25-Aug	3	3	7 bags rubbish removed from summit
20	Glenlude	26 Aug- 1 Sep	22	49	survey exotic trees & shrubs by centre, netting extensions above farm, orchard cleared, lots of brashing survey poly tunnelli site, BBQ
21	Western Isles	9-14 Aug	14	60	beaches cleaned near Huishinis & Cravadale path worked on
22	Skye	20-23 Aug	9	27	Strath Mor path worked on, whin cutting & burning
23	Ben Nevis	28-Sep	4	4	deroughening by corner 2, 4 bags rubbish removed from summit

24	East Schiehallion	28-29 Sep	3	4	connect to Dun Coillich path improved & maintenance on path
25	CALL -Tanera Mor	7-11 Oct	17	84	100 metees Quinag fence removed, clear bothy, path, dyking, gates fence repair
26	Glenlude	8-11 Nov	24	54	300 birch planted, poly tunnel structure erected & path, borehole tested, campsite built, brashing

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