

Issue 49

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SCOTTISH BIODIVERSITY FORUM

THE FORUM

Scotland's Biodiversity: New action for threatened Highland woodlands and species

With concerns over the state of many Scottish woodlands – and fears for the long-term survival of iconic species including red squirrel, pine marten and capercaillie – conservation charity Trees for Life is marking its 25th anniversary this year with a significant expansion of its forest restoration work across the Highlands and with new projects focusing on the recovery of endangered species.

Trees for Life is now extending the geographical range of its forest restoration activity from its previous project area of 1,000 square miles west of Inverness and Loch Ness, and is exploring opportunities to restore neglected and derelict Caledonian pinewoods in other parts of Scotland.

At the same time, the charity is developing a wider range of ecological initiatives to conserve forest species. New projects will deliver practical field research, habitat assessments and species relocations to aid the conservation of key species such as pine marten, red squirrel and wood ants.



© Pine marten by Laurie Campbell
www.lauriecampbell.com



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Do you have a news story? Are you involved in a project? If so, then let the Biodiversity Team know! Ask for our article guidelines to help you make the most of your article.

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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum. The editors reserve the right to edit or exclude articles; the editors' decisions are final.

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Trees For Life—25th Anniversary Project

Trees for Life's Executive Director Alan Watson Featherstone said, "Without urgent action, key parts of Scotland's ancient Caledonian forest could be lost forever, and forest-dependent wildlife such as the Scottish wildcat and capercaillie could become extinct in the UK. As we celebrate 25 years of pioneering conservation action – including the planting of more than a million trees by our volunteers, and the creation of 10,000 acres of new Caledonian forest – we aim to increase the impact and scale of our work. We want to ensure that our children and grandchildren also have the opportunity to enjoy Scotland's wild landscapes and its rare and spectacular wildlife."

Less than half (46%) of Scotland's native woodlands are in "satisfactory condition for biodiversity" and much must be done to reverse centuries of damage, according to Scotland's first complete survey of these important habitats, published by Forestry Commission Scotland last month. The report found that natural regeneration of native pinewoods is scarce. Following a long history of deforestation, the Caledonian forest reached a critical point some 200 years ago, with too few remaining trees and too many deer eating seedlings – leaving 'geriatric' forests of old trees. Today only a fraction of the former forest survives, with 35 isolated remnants of native pinewoods. The need for concerted conservation action – and the lack of young trees to replace mature specimens when lost – is also being highlighted by threats posed by climate change and extreme weather, and the risk of disease affecting the Scots pine, which forms the forest ecosystem's 'backbone' and on which many species depend.

"We want people to get involved through volunteering or financial support, to help restore Scotland's threatened habitats and species. Wildlife tourism generates millions of pounds every year, so bringing new life to impoverished woodlands and barren glens can bring economic as well as environmental benefits,"

The charity's major plans for 2014 include an ambitious project at Trees for Life's flagship Dundreggan Conservation Estate – a biodiversity hotspot in Glenmoriston near Loch Ness – to convert a 300-hectare commercial plantation of non-native trees planted by a previous owner back to native woodland. This will involve the felling of the alien conifers and a pioneering mire restoration scheme, funded by a grant from Scottish Natural Heritage. The whole project will take over 10 years to complete.

Dundreggan is also home to one of Scotland's greatest concentrations of the nationally scarce dwarf birch (*Betula nana*). An area will be fenced off for restoration of these 'wee trees', as part of a broader plan to create a woodland link between Glen Affric and Glenmoriston, and to expand this habitat for species including black grouse, ptarmigan and golden plover.

A programme of research on forest ecology will also be carried out at Dundreggan, and the estate will host a 25th anniversary open weekend on 24-25 May. Meanwhile, a new tree planting project will begin in a Caledonian pinewood remnant at Culligran in Glen Strathfarrar in the autumn.

www.treesforlife.org.uk.



Scottish Forum on Natural Capital starts strong

A ground-breaking initiative to rebuild Scotland's natural capital, the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital (www.naturalcapitalscotland.com), held its first meeting at the end of February where the first 25 organisations from a wide variety of sectors signed up as members.

Members as diverse as Alliance Trust, SSE, Lothian Buses, The Crown Estate and Scottish Environment LINK have signed up to a vision to protect and rebuild Scotland's stocks of natural capital on which we all depend for our livelihoods and quality of life.

Launched three months ago at the World Forum on Natural Capital with the support of First Minister Alex Salmond, the vision of the Scottish Forum is:

- A Scotland in which all parts of society, including companies, NGOs, the Government, public bodies and communities, recognise our reliance on natural capital and the impact we have on it.
- A Scotland in which an understanding of our relationship with natural capital leads to action to protect and rebuild it.
- A Scotland which is exercising leadership to galvanise action both here and beyond Scotland's borders.

Membership of the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital has continued to grow steadily with the National Trust for Scotland, Balfour Beatty, and the Cairngorms National Park Authority amongst those that have signed up since the first meeting. Membership is open to public, private and voluntary organisations that want to contribute to achieving the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital's vision. You can see the full list of members and sign up here:

<http://naturalcapitalscotland.com/who-is-involved/members/>.

The Founding Partners of the Scottish Forum on natural Capital are the Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scotland's 2020 Climate Group, ICAS, Institute of Directors (IoD) Scotland and the University of Edinburgh.

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www.naturalcapitalscotland.com



New Website: Angus Cetacean Awareness Project (ACAP)



The website www.marinelifeargus.co.uk and the Angus Cetacean Awareness Project (ACAP), an Angus based project recording cetaceans in Angus waters, continues to reach out to a wider audience. The website which offers the chance to report whale and dolphin sightings is now on the VisitScotland, Angus and Dundee coasts sections, which will help reach UK and international audiences. Angus Council will also add it to the new Angus Ahead website. The website hosts a wealth of information on local coastal sites, great for land based viewing and also aims to publicise other local recording schemes which record local butterflies, maritime plants and marine non native species.

Since recording began in 2011 sightings of bottlenose dolphins, minke whale, harbour porpoise, common dolphin and even humpback whales have occurred at many locations along the coastline of Angus.

A second print run of small business card size cards in 2013 which went to a wide range of visitor attractions etc. along the Angus and Aberdeenshire coasts; this will be distributed again in 2014. If you would like to receive some please email info@marinelifeargus.co.uk



Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust (HWDT)



Conservation charity Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT) has been awarded £120,000 through the UK Government's Coastal Communities Fund – enabling it to launch an innovative project, to strengthen people's connections to the sea in 15 remote island communities across the Hebrides, including by creating sustainable eco-tourism employment opportunities.

HWDT's ambitious Sea Change project will strengthen conservation of whales, dolphins and porpoises – collectively known as cetaceans – and develop the region's appeal as a major destination for wildlife tourism.

Key to this will be engaging coastal communities in learning, training and volunteering – so that they can develop stronger links with and understanding of their marine environment, and invest in its sustainable use for the long-term benefit of local people.

The scheme will support local people by developing skills and creating work opportunities through an extended Community Sightings Network. It is planned that the Sea Change project will be carried out in Mull, Coll and Tiree, Islay and Jura, Colonsay, Barra, Small Isles (Eigg, Muck, Rum, Canna), in two locations on Skye and in Mallaig and Arisaig on the mainland . Each of these communities attracts tourism and has seen an increase in wildlife tourism in recent years.

The importance of white-tailed eagles to the local economy of Mull and Skye is well-documented. HWDT believes developing sustainable marine wildlife eco-tourism could have similar or greater success. The Sea Change project will directly create two new jobs, and potentially safeguard and indirectly create many more employment opportunities in the region.

..Marine engagement boost for Hebrides communities as Sea Change project wins funding



HWDT will recruit a new full-time Sightings and Strandings Officer, to train volunteers, organise school visits and support 15 community-based hubs on the islands, which will then run the project from their own community. The new employee will also liaise with boat operators, local people and tourists on reporting marine animal sightings and strandings.

HWDT plans to work collaboratively with community enterprises, trusts, wildlife groups, businesses, schools

and individuals, so that the project is tailored to each of the 15 communities and to encourage as many volunteers as possible to get involved. Engagement with local communities and education work are key parts of HWDT's pioneering work to secure the future of western Scotland's cetaceans and basking sharks, as well as the Hebrides' globally important marine environment. A new Visitor Centre Manager at HWDT will ensure that the charity's headquarters in Tobermory becomes the project base and a community resource for learning, training and volunteering.

The Coastal Communities Fund was created to direct regeneration investment to seaside towns and villages to help rebalance their local economies, reduce unemployment and create new work opportunities for young people from the local area. Announcing the Coastal Community Fund winners, Chief Secretary to the Treasury Rt Hon Danny Alexander said: "The Coastal Communities Fund is supporting some of the most fragile communities. It is a great way to make sure that people living around our coastline can share in the benefits of the increased returns for the Crown Estate's marine activities."

Over 50 projects across the UK have been awarded a share of £27.7 million through the Coastal Communities Fund. Details of the project winners are at: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/uk-wide/coastal-communities.

HWDT also carries out scientific surveys, and is currently recruiting volunteers to take part in its 2014 expeditions onboard its research yacht *Silurian*, working alongside marine scientists. For details call 01688 302620 or visit www.hwdt.org.



Scottish Wildlife Trust - Trust receives cash boost to Save our Magnificent Meadows

The Scottish Wildlife Trust has received £110,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help protect meadows in Fife. The award is part of a larger £3 million project led by Plantlife that aims to save the UK's remaining fragments of meadows.

Natural wildflower meadows were once widespread – but sadly across the UK only 2% of the meadows that existed in the 1930s remain. Nearly 7.5 million acres of wildflower meadow have been lost so far and they are still being destroyed.



The Scottish Wildlife Trust will use this award to expand its pioneering grazing scheme - the Flying Flock - which since 2001 has helped protect and restore some of Scotland's most valuable grassland habitats.

The Flying Flock is the Trust's flock of hardy Shetland sheep moving between grasslands to improve their biodiversity through carefully timed conservation grazing. These rare breeds are versatile and enthusiastic browsers - literally experts in their field.

The Trust's Reserve Manager for East Central Scotland, Rory Sandison, said: "This Heritage Lottery Fund Award of £110,000 will be used to purchase more stock and equipment, enabling the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Flying Flock to help more grassland sites than ever before.

"Sites such as our reserves at Bo'mains Meadow, near Bo'ness and Fleecefaulds Meadow, near Ceres, are once again vibrant grasslands rich in colourful flowers and buzzing with invertebrates thanks to the continued efforts of our sheep and rare-breed Shetland cattle."



Moths Count—On-Line Recording



After a long development process, the National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS) online recording system is due to go live very soon and will be available for recorders to use at www.mothscount.org

All records entered on this system will be repatriated to County Moth Recorders for verification and amalgamation into local datasets. Records will not pass directly from the online system to the NMRS database.

Launched in 2007, the NMRS brings together sightings (records) of all macro-moths (larger moths) across the UK, Isle of Man and Channel Islands. It is hoped that in time, full 'Britain and Ireland' distributions will be available for all species. The new scheme covers some 900 species, with thousands of active recorders, and has the potential to generate an enormous dataset of distribution records to benefit nature conservation, public understanding and ecological research.



A similar scheme ran from 1967 to 1982 (organised by the Biological Records Centre) and this provides important historical data about moth distributions, against which we can assess change.

The creation of the new NMRS comes at a very opportune time. Moth recording has never been more popular and the number of recorders is growing rapidly in many areas. As a consequence, recording coverage is increasing, making it possible to achieve realistic assessments of species distribution at the national scale

over a period of years. At the same time, the conservation need for such data has never been more pressing

We need your [help](#)! The NMRS is open to all and anyone can help record moths. Many macro-moths are active or easily disturbed during the day, and records of these are just as important as nocturnal species. Please send the details of your sightings (species, date, number seen, place and grid reference) to the appropriate [County Moth Recorder](#) so that they can form part of the NMRS.

The NMRS is an accessible database, in accordance with the NMRS data policy, not a 'black hole' for records. Provisional distribution maps for all macro-moth species have been published in the Provisional Atlas of the UK's Larger Moths and are also publicly available to [view](#) online. These maps provide a useful source of information and feedback to anyone with an interest in the status and distribution of the UK's macro-moths. They enable recorders to put their own sightings into a wider context and stimulate further recording by identifying coverage gaps at local and national levels.



The National Cycle Network (NCN) in Scotland, coordinated by Sustrans, comprises 2090 miles of cycleways, of which 590 are traffic-free. While these 'greenways' have traditionally been managed primarily with the safety of users in mind, it has long been recognised that they provide invaluable habitat resource, species movement corridors and an 'outdoor classroom' opportunity. Sustrans has therefore launched **Greener Greenways** in Scotland,



aiming to enhance biodiversity along the traffic-free NCN routes and engage both communities and volunteers, through wildlife recording and practical management. Funded by the Scottish Government and Scottish Natural Heritage, the project was launched in August 2013 and will initially run for three years.

Our target is to enhance 100km of Sustrans-managed greenways and over 100km of greenways managed by organisations such as local authorities and other landowners.

The project is now well underway and to date we have recruited over 50 volunteer **Wildlife Champions** from a broad spectrum of society. We have also developed monthly training events running throughout 2014, delivered by both Sustrans and our partner organisations. These will provide the necessary skills for volunteers to survey their greenways, contribute to habitat management plans and carry out the management work.

We have selected four routes for the first phase of the project, located primarily in the western central belt of Scotland. These comprise a range of habitat types, management challenges and ownership options. We are working with volunteers, partners and landowners to deliver

greenways which are not only a joy to walk or cycle on, but also benefit the wildlife and enhance the overall experience of NCN users.



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Entries open for Scottish Tree of the Year

Scottish Tree of the Year is a new competition organised by the Woodland Trust Scotland and supported by Fred MacAulay and players of People's Postcode Lottery. It aims to find the nation's best loved trees.

The competition is open to any living tree in Scotland that has a great story to tell, and anybody can enter. Applications close on Friday 9 May.

An independent panel of judges will shortlist six trees based on their story, and a public vote in September will decide the winner.



Andrew Fairbairn from the Woodland Trust Scotland said: "Virtually every community has at least one tree that stands out from the rest and has an amazing story to tell. It could be a tree that's associated with a famous person or a battle, or one that the local people have rallied around to save it from being felled.

"By celebrating what trees mean to people and the stories that they have to tell we can help to raise awareness of the need to protect them. We're delighted that players of People's Postcode Lottery are supporting the competition to find the best loved trees in Scotland."

Comedian and broadcaster Fred MacAulay is supporting the search. He said: "Tree of the Year is a fantastic way to celebrate our natural heritage. We're inviting people to tell us about the trees that are most important to them and become champions for them.

"Scotland is blessed with thousands of amazing trees. Whether it's in the middle of a wood, half way up a mountain or in the heart of a city, if it's a tree that people love and tell stories about then we want to hear about it."

The winner of the competition will go on to be Scotland's entry in the European Tree of the Year competition in 2015.

Groups can enter Scottish Tree of the Year by downloading an [application form](#) from the Woodland Trust's website. Entries should be received by Friday 9 May.



Butterfly Conservation Scotland...



© David Whitaker www.highlandwildlifephotography.com

One of Scotland's rarest and most charismatic butterflies – the chequered skipper, is far more widespread than previously thought, a survey has revealed.

The small, fast-flying chequered skipper, which became extinct in England in 1976, now only occurs in the UK within a 30-mile radius of Fort William in the Highlands.

The butterfly's restricted distribution can be explained by the region's warm, damp summers and mild winters which allows the deciduous purple moor-grass, on which the caterpillar feeds, to stay green late into the autumn.

This helps the caterpillars to complete their development before hibernating for the winter. Elsewhere in the UK, purple moor-grass turns brown too early in the year for this to happen.

Recent work by Butterfly Conservation and the JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee) has predicted, through computer modelling, that the butterfly's distribution could be underestimated by around 20% at a 10-km level and as much as 80% at a finer 1-km resolution.

In 2012 and 2013 Butterfly Conservation Scotland encouraged the public to look for the butterfly in the top 100 1-km squares that the modelling predicted were the most suitable for the butterfly, but where it had not previously been recorded.

Over the two years the butterfly was found in 20 of the targeted squares but not in 27, the remaining squares were not surveyed. But chequered skipper was also found in an additional 48 new 1km squares, where it had not previously been recorded. These discoveries have increased the known range of the butterfly by a staggering 28% at a 1-km resolution.

...SPREADING SKIPPER SURPRISE

Most new sightings were within the species known range in north Argyll and south Lochaber, but there are a number of hotspots of new sightings including the far west end of Loch Arkaig, Glen Etive, around Acharacle, Loch Leven, Taynuilt area and the Ardnamurchan peninsula.

The results also gave an insight into how elusive the butterfly can be as chequered skipper was not always seen on repeat visit to squares that were surveyed more than once. In many cases it took three visits to confirm the butterfly's presence. We are therefore planning to repeat the survey again in 2014.

The results were unveiled at Butterfly Conservation Scotland's annual Spring Recorders Gathering, attended by almost one hundred active volunteers at Scottish Natural Heritage's Battleby Conference Centre.

Dr Tom Prescott, Senior Conservation Officer for Butterfly Conservation Scotland, said: "The survey has been a marvellous success and shows what can be achieved by encouraging the public to target survey effort to specific squares.

"It has also proved the worth of the model and that such an approach may be a useful technique to help determine the true distribution of other under-recorded species in Scotland."

The chequered skipper is usually on the wing from mid May until the end of June. It can be seen on warm and sunny days, even during brief spells of sunshine, feeding on nectar particularly of bugle, marsh thistle and orchids.

CONTACTS

For information and images contact: **Dr Tom Prescott**, Senior Conservation Officer, Butterfly Conservation Scotland : tprescott@butterfly-conservation.org 01540 661469 / 07979 785665 or visit : www.butterfly-conservation.org/chequeredskipper



© G Hiscocks

Creating a buzz on Colonsay

Landmark reserve to provide protection for native black bees.

Scotland's native black bee is now protected thanks to the creation of the first reserve of its kind in the UK.

The black bee (*Apis mellifera mellifera*) is thought to be the only native honey bee in Scotland and the new legislation, The Bee Keeping (Colonsay and Oronsay) Order 2013, came into force on the 1st January 2014.

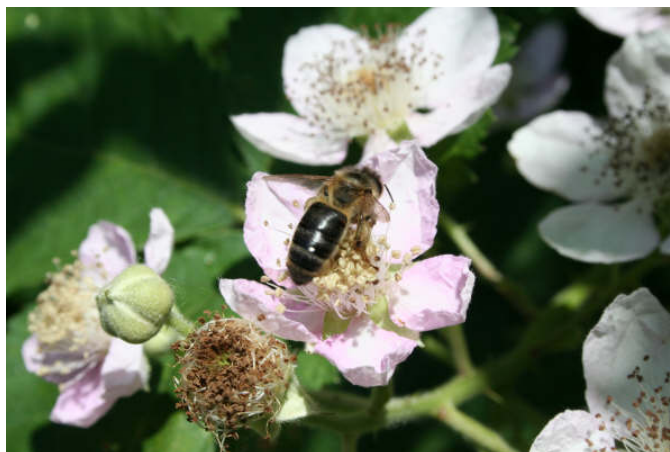


Photo by kind permission © Roger Patterson

It protects the species from cross-breeding and disease, and means it will be an offence to keep any honeybees that are not black bees on Colonsay and Oronsay.

Environment and Climate Change Minister Paul Wheelhouse said:

“The black bee is an important genetic resource for all beekeepers – from a Scottish perspective and a considerable academic interest too. Our belief in this has led us to seek protection for the bee and thus help to protect its genetic integrity from long term dilution and loss of this important asset. The introduction of this strong, landmark legislation – overwhelmingly backed in our consultation last year - will go a long way to achieving our aim.

The colonies being kept on the island are an increasingly rare source of black bees left in Europe, highlighting the importance of this reserve – the first of its kind in the UK. The Bee Keeping Order will ensure that the population of black bees on Colonsay are protected from hybridisation with non-native bees, ensure a bright future for black bees on the island and illustrates how our non-native species legislation can be used to protect our natural wildlife.”

Andrew Abrahams, currently the only beekeeper on Colonsay, said:

“I am naturally delighted with the Scottish Government's commitment to help conserve our native honey bee.



Colonsay's isolation and rich floral diversity make it an ideal location for a Reserve that can maintain genetic purity and a disease free population of black bees.

The Scottish Government's recognition of the Colonsay and Oronsay Reserve will also help and inspire other beekeepers throughout Scotland to work with and conserve black bees.”

Fungus Feature: *Gyromitra esculenta* (False morel)

This is one of the larger, stalked members of the ascomycete division. The fertile surface is the outer surface of the brown, convoluted 'cap', which is effectively an inverted 'cup'. The colour will vary from yellowish brown, through red brown to almost black – although the latter can be the result of dry conditions. The cap area is supported on a relatively short, white but sometimes a pale brown stem, which is furrowed and contains several hollow chambers. The whole structure can be up to 20cm across, with the cap area irregularly fusing with the stipe (stem).

Of particular interest with this species is the question of its edibility. With a specific name '*esculenta*' inferring that it should be something good to eat, it might come as a surprise to find out that, without very careful preparation, this fungus can cause serious illness or even death.

Fruiting:

This is a spring species, with most of the records in the months of April and May. There are scattered records in February and March and a couple from June. *Morchella vulgaris* displays a very similar fruiting pattern as do several

other delightful members of the Morchellaceae including *Verpa conica*, *Morchella* (or *Mitrophora*) *semilibera* and *Gyromitra ancilis*.

Habitat:

This species is thought to be a wood rotter and is often found in sandy soils almost always associated with coniferous trees. It turns up in gardens as well as woodlands and just occasionally is said to be associating with broadleaves. It has been found growing on a very dead fallen birch trunk.

Distribution:

Widespread in the UK but only common in some areas of Scotland. There appears to be a central and eastern distribution in Scotland. The total number of sites for this species on the Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland is 294 and 119 of these are in Scotland.



For both photos © Liz Holden

The invasive non-native species apps are here

Record invasive non-native species on the move with the PlantTracker, Aquainvaders and Sealife Tracker



Available for iPhone and Android (OS 4.0.3+)

Your records will be verified by an expert and will contribute to the national data set on invasive non-native species.

Download these apps for free and try them out — we would love to receive your sightings.

<http://naturelocator.org/snh.html>



INNS— Look out—Non-Natives are Springing up

As spring is in the air, now is the time to be thinking about the plan of attack on the invasive non native species in your patch. Check that your spraying equipment is in working order and certificates are in date. For spraying alongside water courses you need PA1 and PA6w. There are approved formulations of glyphosate and 2.4-D amine that can be used in or near water.

Giant Hogweed is best sprayed early in the year in April or May when the shoots are relatively small, you might need to revisit to spray later growth – but certainly a head start helps weaken the plant for the season. A chemical free but labour inten-



© RPS Group Plc



© GBNNSS

sive approach is to dig through the tap root – this is easily done when the plants are small. You must cut the root at least 15cm below the surface, it is advisable to check that the plant has been killed some weeks later.

Don't put the job off as Giant hogweed can grow up to 7 m tall in a season !! Giant hogweed seeds can remain viable for up to 7 years in the soil, so it is crucial to return to sites where the Giant hogweed has been controlled to prevent any further seeding.

Spring is also a good time to start to

remove the Himalayan balsam plants that will be popping up, these can be easily hand pulled or cut back. The fragments are not controlled waste so this is a great task for cutting or pulling, but you must cut below the lowest node or the plant will quickly regrow and flower. The seeds do not last long, they are viable for only about 18 months, so within a couple of years you should be free of balsam – provided you have found all seed sources. Provided you remove the plant before it has time to seed you have a bit more time to remove the Himalayan balsam plants, making it a great task for community groups to get involved in.

© GBNNSS



The Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF)

The SBIF was established in June 2012 following on from an e-petition to the Scottish Parliament in 2008 that called for the development of an integrated approach to the collection, analysis and sharing of biological data in Scotland.

The SBIF's aim is to benefit biodiversity by improving the flow of biological information between organisations and individuals that collect data, and users of that data.

To achieve these aims the Forum has established a Steering Group, a Data

flow and data sharing Sub-Group, and a Commercial interests Sub-Group, and since March 2013 a part-time Co-ordinator has been employed to support the work of the Forum.



During 2013 the SBIF published its first Action Plan, which in summary contains seven actions:

Action 1: Finalise the SBIF Vision

Action 2: Pilot a model data pathway

Action 3: Survey the data needs of the SBIF community and consider the information

Action 4: Prepare and promote statements of best practice on data sharing

Action 5: Produce and promote standardised data collection and sharing protocol

Action 6: Compile and disseminate case studies that illustrate good practice and the value of data gathering and sharing for conservation and management in Scotland

Action 7: Encourage Local Record Centres (LRCs) to carry out a gap analysis on their data holdings and to identify if data available through the NBN Gateway can fill the gaps.



These actions are seeking to address some of the issues that inhibit the flow of biodiversity data in Scotland. Their delivery is being led by SBIF supporters and we are currently working on a delivery schedule. Delivery will involve cross-sector collaboration within the Forum to ensure the needs of all sectors are being met and a collaborative approach should enable the Forum to build on existing initiatives. Action delivery will ultimately lead to the mobilisation of more data.

Action 1 is now complete and the Steering Group approved the following vision statement at the end of July 2013: High quality species and habitat data will be collected and managed through a sustainable, co-ordinated and integrated local and national framework of organisations, partnerships and initiatives. These data will be available to ensure that Scotland's biodiversity, ecosystems and people benefit.

...SBIF (cont.)

The rest of the actions are underway and more details about how they are progressing can be found on our web pages. Of note though are:

Action 2, piloting a model data pathway, which is being developed in collaboration with the NBN Trust. Understanding and improving the routes by which data is made available and accessed is seen as fundamental to mobilising more data.

Action 6, the compilation of case studies. Four case studies, one each from the local authority, marine, academic research and public sectors, have been commissioned to illustrate the importance of biodiversity data. We hope to be disseminating information regarding each case study later this year.

The SBIF has also been developing its communications plan and in 2013 established some new web pages and a Twitter feed (@SB_Info_Forum). Please refer to the web pages for more information about the background to the Forum, the work we do, information about the different sectors of the data community, and a list of resources.

For contact details see: [http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/SBIF ContactUs.php](http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/SBIF>ContactUs.php)



The Wildlife Information Centre for the Lothians and Borders

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■ SBIF home page

The Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum (SBIF)

Resources

A selection of websites that may be of interest to the biodiversity data community in Scotland.

Data collection

Apps & online portals - general

- **Biological Records Centre (BRC)**: supports recording activities of national recording schemes and societies
- **iRecord**: online recording portal for wildlife sightings
- **iSpot**: online recording portal & app for wildlife sightings
- **Nature's Calendar**: online portal for recording & viewing seasonal events
- **Open Air Laboratories (OPAL)**: OPAL encourages engagement in citizen science projects
- **PlantTracker**: app for recording invasive non-native plant species
- **Record Wildlife**: recording app for Android phones

Apps & online portals - species specific

- **Ancient Tree Hunt**: online portal for records of old trees
- **Big Butterfly Count**: online recording portal for butterfly sightings; operates annually during July and August
- **BirdTrack**: online recording portal for bird sightings

Dumfries & Galloway Wildlife Festival.....



Introduction

Welcome to Scotland's most friendly family wildlife festival. **Dumfries & Galloway's 2014 Wild Spring Festival** runs from the **5th April to 5th May** and features over **100 events** many free and most hosted by local wildlife guides. Set amidst beautiful unspoilt countryside, our festival is perfect for families and wildlife fans alike to discover and stay in the most surprising and naturally inspiring part of Scotland.

In recognition of **Scotland's 2014 Homecoming** theme, this year's festival will celebrate wildlife coming home to Dumfries & Galloway for the summer. From the giant, but harmless, Basking Sharks of the Solway, to the warblers and flycatchers of our ancient oak woods, the beautiful butterflies that travel hundreds of miles for our flowers, and the majestic Peregrine Falcon returning to nest on our precipitous cliffs.

From Red Deer to Red Kites and Otters to Oystercatchers and from Badgers to Black Grouse, Barnacle Geese, Bats and the charismatic Red Squirrel, Dumfries and Galloway is teeming with wildlife this Spring and throughout the year, find out more about our festival and all things wildlife on **www.wildseasons.co.uk**

On behalf of the 2014 Wild Spring Festival, I extend to you a very warm welcome to the most naturally inspiring area of Scotland.

Peter Norman
Biodiversity Officer



A naturally inspiring break

Dumfries & Galloway offers a range of quality hotel, B&B and self-catering accommodation that is second to none. Whether you plan an overnight stay, a long weekend break or an extended holiday during the school holidays, our local accommodation providers have great value deals and packages to coincide with the 2014 Wild Spring Festival.

You can also go search and book accommodation in Dumfries & Galloway right now at **www.visitsouthwestscotland.com**

Naturally inspiring things to do

If you're visiting Dumfries & Galloway for our Wild Spring Festival, you'll be surprised at the variety of things to do locally. There's foodie heaven at weekly farmers' market, world renowned 7stanes mountain bike trails, castles, gardens and golf galore. As Scotland Welcomes the World in 2014, Dumfries & Galloway extends a very warm welcome and some outstanding wildlife and landscape. Find out about the variety of things to do at **www.visitdumfriesandgalloway.co.uk/see-do/**

Greenland White-fronted Goose Study

The Greenland white-fronted goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris* is found scattered locally through north and west Scotland where it's traditional distribution was determined by the occurrence of oceanic patterned mires and coastal raised bogs. It is culturally important in the Celtic landscapes of western Scotland and Ireland with song and poetry references to 'the geese in the bog' referring to these iconic birds.

Greenland whitefronts are the most distinct sub-species of the circumpolar white-fronted goose and has been categorised as "Endangered" using IUCN's global Red List criteria. The population winters exclusively in Britain and Ireland and migrates via staging grounds in southern and western Iceland to summer breeding grounds in west Greenland.

The world population showed a significant decline from a maximum of 23,000 individuals in the 1950s to between 14,300 and 16,600 in the late 1970s. It was suggested that this decline was primarily due to the loss of peatland habitat traditionally used by the geese. Protective legislation halted shooting on the wintering grounds and conservation measures in the early 1980s led to an increase in the population to 27,000 by November 1989 followed by a further increase to peak at 35,700 in 1999. However, in the years since then, numbers have fallen dramatically.

The international count in spring 2013 located a combined global total of 22,156 Greenland white-fronted geese, the lowest recorded since spring 1986, although down only 1.1% (247 birds) on the last world population estimate of 22,403 in spring 2012. This change was somewhat encouraging after the 13% decline on the previous year's total and perhaps not so great as might have been expected given signs of low reproductive success evident on the wintering grounds (but specially in Ireland) after the summer of 2012. However, with adult mortality estimates at about 16% and recent production being in the range of 5-8% the prospects for the population look poor.

There is increased evidence that the low reproductive success driving the recent decline has been caused by competition from recent rapid colonisation of north Atlantic Canada geese, *Branta canadensis interior* in the breeding grounds of western Greenland. Additionally, climate

change has been identified as a major factor: recent late spring snowfall at the time of the birds arrival on the breeding grounds is likely constraining the ability to acquire nutrients for clutch development.

Probably both these factors are acting together.



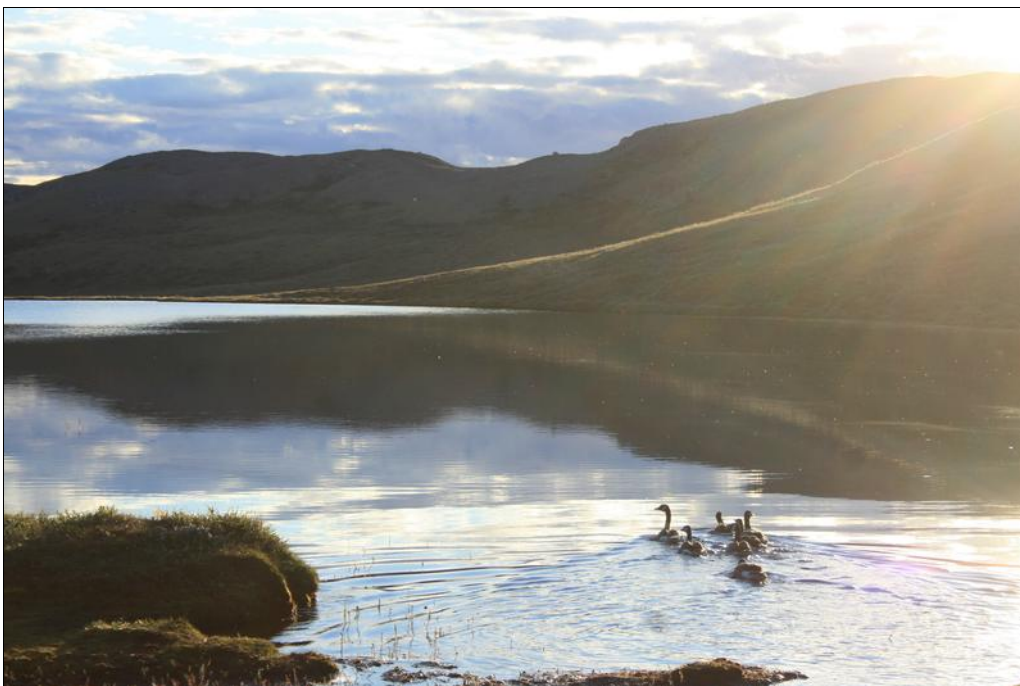
The global population status of Greenland White-fronted Geese

Following its listing as a priority in SNH's Species Action Framework in 2007, an international workshop was held on Islay in February 2009 (<http://gwfg-conservation.wikispaces.com/Islay+international+workshop>) to draft an international species action plan for the geese. The plan was adopted by the Contracting Parties of the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement in May 2012. This calls for urgent action to better understand the drivers of decline, and also for actions to minimise further sources of adult mortality on the wintering grounds.

The Greenland White-fronted Goose Study Group continues to monitor the population in the UK, Iceland and Greenland. In July a team of researchers will undertake a further expedition to the breeding grounds in western Greenland with the aim of catching and ringing both Greenland whitefronts and Canada geese in order to be able to monitor the movements of both of these species and gain life history data on marked individuals.



We are continually grateful for sightings of ringed birds which typically have an orange or buff coloured neck collar engraved with a black code and can be found potentially in any of the flocks. Please send any information to Tony Fox tfo@dmu.dk More information can be found on the GWfG Study Group website <http://greenlandwhitefront.org/>.



NTS: Young naturalists pine for Ben Lawers

The iconic Scots pine is making a return to the lower slopes of Ben Lawers thanks to the combined efforts of the National Trust for Scotland, some local young naturalists and small group tour operator Rabbie's.

Local children from the Killin Green Team planted fifteen individually protected Scots Pines at Cragganester on the Ben Lawers National Nature Reserve which is in the care of the National Trust for Scotland. Around fifty trees will be in place by the end of the project.

Ben Lawers property manager Helen Cole said:

"It is fantastic to have the next generation of conservationists helping us to plant the next generation of Scots pine. These young people will be planting trees that, we hope, will still be standing strong in over one hundred years' time".

The 1769 map of the area shows that Scots Pine were planted within three enclosures on the lower slopes of Ben Lawers, but only a handful remain. The stumps of those which were felled over the years remain together with the casualties of recent gales. The newly planted trees come from a local seed source and will, according to Property Manager Helen Cole, be recreating some of the features of a former landscape, giving visitors an idea of how the area might have looked in the 1700s.

The work has been generously funded by Edinburgh-based Rabbie's which runs tours to the UK and Ireland's best loved beauty spots. The company has well-established environmental credentials and is keen to 'give something back' to Scotland's heritage and to the communities and places that help make their tours so successful. They have funded several previous projects on Ben Lawers over the last few years and have actively contributed to one by providing a minibus full of volunteers.

Hazel Rickett, Managing Director at Rabbie's said:

"Rabbie's are delighted to be able to fund this and other projects, NTS do a fantastic job at preserving and restoring our environment for future generations to enjoy and actively encourage the engagement of communities and children, something that we are also passionate about.

Planting at Cragganester has been a more delicate operation than usual, due to the fascinating archaeology of the area, which contains extensive evidence of previous dwellings on the hillside and special consent was needed to enable the planting go ahead.



Cont.

Head of Archaeology, Derek Alexander said:

“Ben Lawers is fortunate in not only having a wealth of archaeological remains that date back to the period of the agricultural improvements, at the end of the 18th century, but much of this is also associated with excellent documentary evidence from the estate records. The Trust has over the years undertaken detailed research into the history of the area and it is good to see the replanting work using this information to inform its tree planting schemes.”

The conservation charity has recently established an archaeological trail at nearby Kiltyrie which aims to bring the landscape and it's often overlooked features to life for visitors, pointing out the signs of those who lived and worked the land centuries before.

The pine planting is the latest in a series of projects to restore native tree species in the Killin and Ben Lawers area which is renowned for its outstanding range and diversity of



vegetation, especially arctic-alpine species. The reserve is important for the very large number of nationally rare or scarce montane plant species that it supports, including vascular plants, lichens and bryophytes. It also has an outstanding diversity of invertebrates with many nationally rare or notable species.

Follow Ben Lawers on Facebook to keep up to date with their wide-ranging conservation work.

Contact Sarah Cuthbert-Kerr on 0844 493 2483/ 07713 786277



 the National Trust
for Scotland
a place for everyone

Launch of Ecosystem Services Community Scotland ..



ESCom is an emerging initiative to support collaboration between science, policy and practice to better manage Scotland's natural resources. In recent years the concept of 'ecosystem services', or benefits from nature, has gained prominence in decision-making, ranging from the [Convention on Biological Diversity Aichi Target](#), to the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#) and the new [Biodiversity Strategy for Scotland](#). The ecosystem services

concept is seen by many as a useful model to support decision-making between science, policy and practice. However, to be successful it requires a strong willingness for collaboration and joint understanding.

The ESCom initiative was initiated as a research collaboration between four organisations seeking to align research, improve collaboration with policy and practice and increase impact. They are: Centre for Ecology and Research (CEH), Forest Research, The James Hutton Institute (JHI) and The University of Edinburgh.

Who is it for:

ESCom emerged as a bottom-up research collaboration between researchers. However, ESCom should become an inclusive and open community with a wide constituency including:

- Scottish Government
- Local authorities
- Government agencies (SEPA, SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland)
- Research organisations and universities
- Environmental NGOs
- Professional organisations
- Trade bodies
- Private sector companies, including SMEs



..ESCom

Funding:

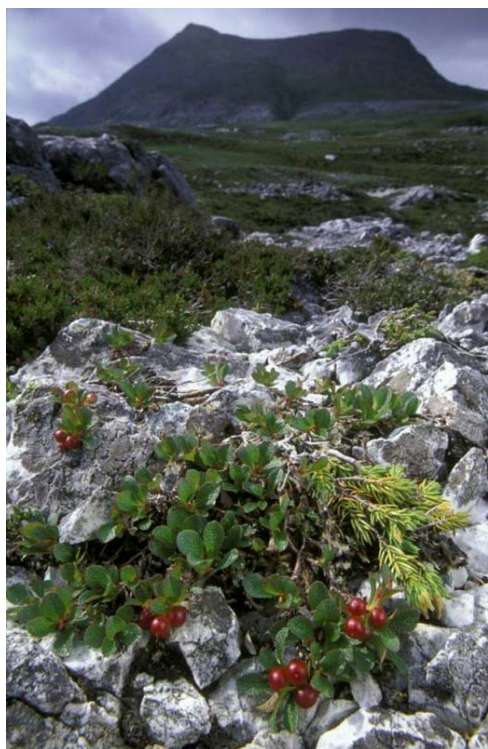
ESCom is not a legal entity and is currently funded through in-kind contributions from the four founding organisations as the aims align with core institutional objectives and current project activities including: The OPERAs (Operational Potential of Ecosystem Research Applications) and OpenNESS (Operationalisation of natural capital and ecosystem services) projects, funded by the European Commission under the Environment (including climate change) Theme of the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technical Development.



ESCom aims to become a community of practice for ecosystem services research, decision-making and natural resource management in Scotland.

To achieve this ESCom will:

1. Attempt to align Scottish ecosystem services research, to maximise value, identify synergies, and avoid duplication
2. Work with Policy and Practice to gain better understanding of user needs, provide relevant research, and achieve impact
3. Organise and promote events to support knowledge exchange, and promote these events through extensive networks

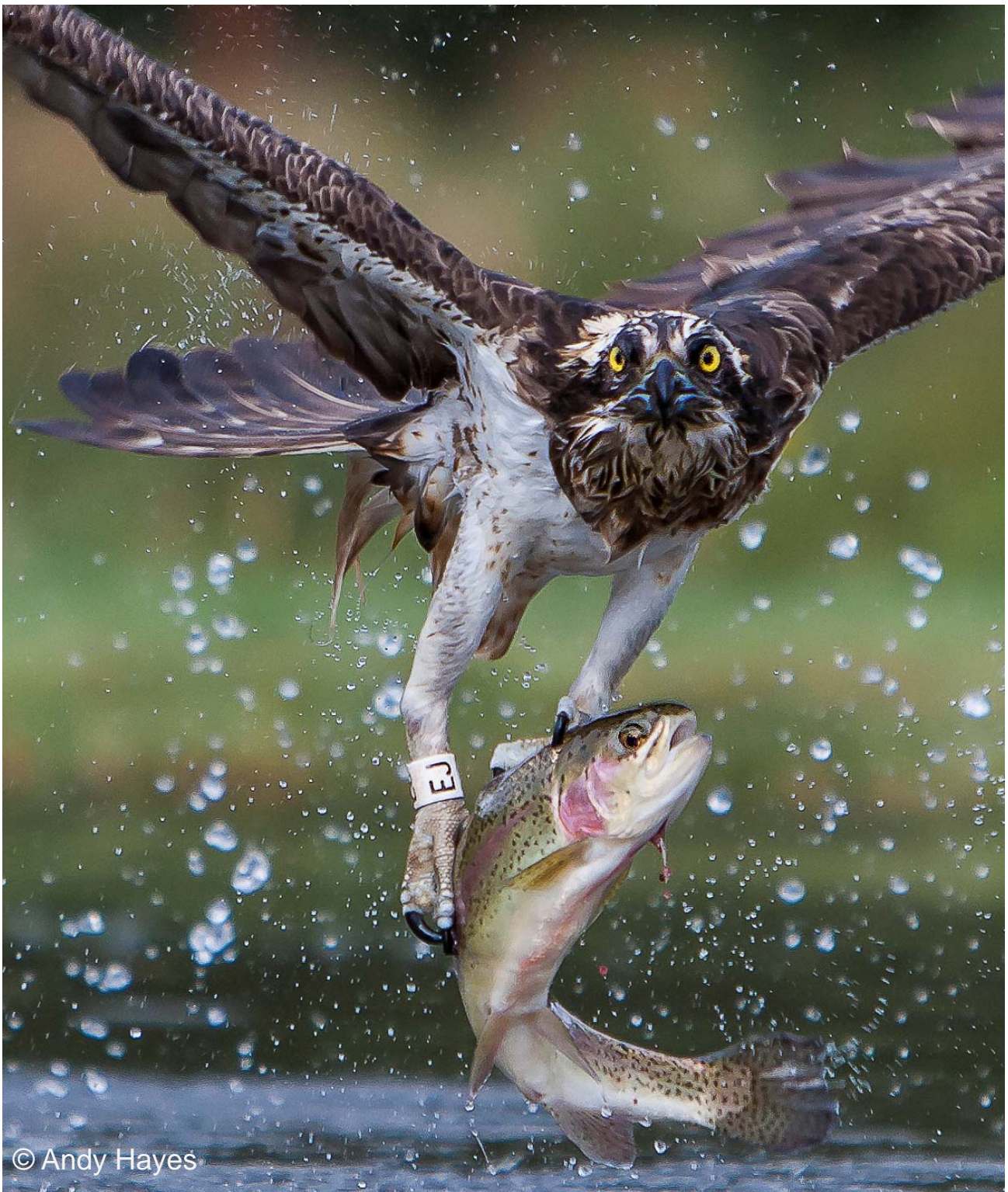


ESCom will be formally launched at the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation from the 29th of April – 1st May 2014.

The event is free (other than a nominal charge of £15.00 to attend the dinner on the 30th April).

[:www.escomscotland.wordpress.com](http://www.escomscotland.wordpress.com)





Veteran female osprey EJ, has arrived back to the famous nest at the RSPB's Loch Garten Osprey Centre for the 12th consecutive year, much to the delight of staff. She touched down at 1.25pm on Monday 24th March, a day ahead of her usual arrival date in the Cairngorms. Identified by the letters on her leg ring, EJ will now spend some time recovering from her exhausting migratory journey.

HLF—Inner Forth gets Lottery Funding

An ambitious project that aims to revitalise and celebrate some of the Inner Forth's key natural and historic locations has been awarded £1.9m by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Inner Forth Landscape Initiative (IFLI) will use the funding over the next four years to help protect historic sites, connect fragmented

wildlife habitats, improve access routes, and provide learning and volunteering opportunities.



The IFLI partnership is made up of RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Falkirk Council, Stirling Council, Clackmannanshire Council, Central Scotland Forest Trust, Sustrans, Historic Scotland and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

The Forth is internationally recognised as an important site for wildlife, with expansive mudflats providing refuge for thousands of wildfowl and wading birds in winter.

The IFLI consists of 50 individual projects that will run between now and 2018. These include plans to improve access to heritage sites such as Clackmannan Tower and Black Devon Wetlands; enhancement of Wester Moss and Fallin Bing; management of important wildlife habitats at Bo'ness and Kinneil Estate; and work by community groups across the area to research local mining and trading history.





Diary Dates

15th-16th April 2014—SRUC/SEPA Biennial Conference - Delivering multiple benefits from our land: sustainable development in practice. Venue: John McIntyre Conference Centre of the University of Edinburgh. Further information at: <http://www.sruc.ac.uk/srucsepaconf>

10th—11th May 2014—RSPB, Scottish Bird Fair. Venue Hopetoun House, Edinburgh. Interested in wildlife? Love the outdoors? There's fun for all the family at the Scottish Birdfair . Further information at: <http://scottishbirdfair.org.uk/>

12th-13th May 2014—The John Muir Conference—National Parks & Protected Areas for the 21st Century. Venue: Perth Concert Hall. Scotland's National Parks and conservation bodies have come together to create a one-off conference that will explore our approaches to managing protected areas and national parks in the UK. For further information: <http://johnmuir100.com/>

17th-25th May 2014—Scotland's Nature Festival—Various events around Scotland. For further information see: <http://www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk/area/naturefestival/> And <http://www.list.co.uk/>

