

Issue 3
September 2024



Welcome

Welcome to our third issue bringing to you updates from our team and partners.

This Summer has been an extremely productive season on the ground (and in the air)! Whilst our fabulous volunteers have been out collecting seeds ready for germination, our team and partners have been training for their drone operators' licenses – read more to see how we can all help each other!

In other news, we hear from vegetation ecologist Innes Manders to discover why Glen Lochay is one of the most important sites for montane willow in Scotland. Plus, we get to meet some of the students from the University of Stirling who are getting involved with Wild Strathfillan.

Also in this issue: we have begun a new round of recruitment – please keep reading and help share these vocational opportunities within your networks! Plus, more updates for our Partners Meet up event on the 18th of September.

Thanks for reading, sharing and for your valuable and exciting contributions.

With best wishes,

Ellie Mayhew
Project Development Manager – Nature Restoration

In this issue...

**Wild Strathfillan
Case Study in the
race to net-Zero!**
Page 3

**Partners' Meet-Up
in Crianlarich**
Pages 4

Drone Training
Page 5

**'Growing new talent'
- Intern Opportunities**
Page 6

Volunteer Round-Up
Page 7-8

**New relict
populations of rare
Montane Willows
discovered in Glen
Lochay**
Page 9-11

We're recruiting!
Page 12

Get in touch!
Page 13

Wild Strathfillan Case Study in the race to net-zero!

The Wild Strathfillan initiative is very excited to be part of Scotland's National Parks in world first as they join Race to Zero. Our recent substantial funding boost thanks to the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot will help kickstart nature recovery across the landscape. With our dedicated team in place will work with partners to deliver a suite of practical conservation projects 'From Lochside to Mountain-top' ranging from floodplain restoration and conservation grazing to montane habitat restoration.

The news comes following The UK's National Parks recent announcement, that include Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and The Cairngorms, having become the first in the world to join the UN-backed 'Race to Zero' initiative, aiming to halve their global carbon emissions by 2030 and become significant net carbon sinks by 2050.

This is just the beginning of the partnership's long-term plans for Wild Strathfillan, and thanks to the enthusiasm of local land managers, local groups and volunteers, we have a long list of future projects which we would like to take forward together.





Wild Strathfillan Partners' Meet-up

**Wednesday, 18 September 2024, The Crianlarich Hotel,
FK20 8RW**

Thank you to everyone who has RSVP'd for this event. As well as meeting the Wild Strathfillan team, the event will also be a chance to learn about some of the work we're delivering across the landscape and communities in the Wild Strathfillan area. Please join us from 10:00am onwards for registration and refreshments.

An optional site visit to the Glen Falloch Tree Nursery will be available to participants – as parking space will be limited please let us know beforehand if you would like to attend so we can make provisional car-sharing arrangements.

RSVP'S - We still have some places available, please get in touch by dropping us an email to info@trustinthepark.org along with any dietary/access requirements.

Finally we are **calling out for our delivery partners** who would be interested in adding to our 'Progress so far' slot either with a short verbal or slide presentation and/or hosting a 30 minute break out session - usually something that would involve an interactive activity. Please get in touch to find out more,

Times		Agenda Item
10:30am	1	Housekeeping - Marie Harvey, Communications Officer for the Countryside Trust.
10:35am	2	Welcome and Apologies - Ellie Mayhew, Project Development Manager for Nature Restoration.
10:40am	3	Overview of Wild Strathfillan - Ellie Mayhew
10:55am	4	Team Introductions
11:05am	5	Progress so far – where are we now? Including updates from delivery partners.
12:05pm	6	Comfort Break
12:15pm	7	Breakout sessions.
12:45pm	8	Lunch and Networking Soup & sandwiches, tea and coffee.
13:45pm	9	Wild Strathfillan: Where Next?
14:00pm	10	Questions: Open Floor
14:05pm	11	Closing Remarks and Session End
14:30pm - 16:00 pm	12	Optional Site Visit (Glenfalloch Tree Nursery)



Drone Training

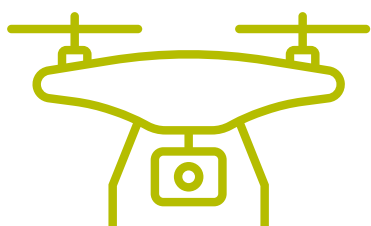
Wild Strathfillan takes to the air!

Several members of the Wild Strathfillan staff team along with 4 others members from the initiative partnership are soon to become fully trained thermal imaging drone operators with thanks to the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund Transforming Nature Fund. Following their successful classroom training earlier this month the newbie pilots will be taking to the air outdoors for flight tests of the DJI Matrice 300 RTK (if you want to get really technical) before becoming fully qualified.

As a commercial drone with advanced AI capabilities plus 6 directional sensing and positioning capabilities, including a J20TH thermal imaging camera with a 200x max zoom, thermal sensor and 1200m laser rangefinder – overall it is a pretty cool piece of kit.

The thermal imaging drone was originally bought to monitor herbivore populations, in particular in wooded and hard to reach areas in conjunction with Deer Management Groups; to survey interesting and scarce plants at remote and inaccessible locations such as on rocky crags; and to capture aerial photographs of the landscape. It can also be used for other purposes that support nature restoration initiatives within the Wild Strathfillan area, for example checking fencelines around a SSSI or woodland area, or river condition monitoring.

Can we provide you with drone monitoring support?



The drone is available for use for free for any of the objectives we've mentioned and we are now seeking opportunities for our newbie qualified operators to complete their annual flight logs and to put their new skills in to practice. If you have any drone monitoring work that you would like to be done, then please get in touch with Gail@trustinthepark.org to find out more.



Nature Restoration

Growing New Talent

This summer we gave a warm welcome to intern Ellie McGivern from the University of Stirling who joined our Nature Restoration team to discover more about the wonderful world of Wild Strathfillan!

As well as learning about the operational aspects of the charity from its governance to its communications, Ellie over her months placement shadowed our team out in the field to discover more about the initiatives' montane flora restoration, woodland creation and habitat monitoring projects.

Ellie is the first of several interns joining us this summer to gain invaluable experience and knowledge of working in the environmental sector. To say farewell, the team enjoyed a sunset picnic and a paddle in Loch Lomond.

In our next issue we meet Kirsty and Fay, Environmental Science students also from the University of Stirling to find out more about their experience working with our Nature Restoration team!



Volunteer Round-up

An excellent year for Rowan!

Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Volunteers were very busy at the start of September helping to collect thousands of Rowan, Hazel and Downy Birch seeds.

You may have noticed that it has been an excellent year for Rowan, with many tree branches being weighed down by the abundance of orange-red berries. This is great news for our winter thrushes, such as Fieldfares and Redwings, who will soon be arriving to feast upon them! Each Rowan berry contains up to 8 seeds, which are usually dispersed through the droppings of birds.

Volunteers collected hundreds of Downy Birch catkins which, when allowed to dry out, drop thousands of tiny, winged seeds. They are perfectly adapted to being wind-dispersed, which helps this pioneer species establish at new sites. The catkins were collected in special mesh bags which allow the catkins to dry out and release their seeds.

All of the seeds collected will be processed, placed into cell trays to germinate and grow, and eventually planted out as saplings in Glen Falloch and the wider Wild Strathfillan area. Huge thanks to our volunteers and Ranger Jo for all their support and hard work, as without local provenance seeds, none of this could happen!



Volunteer Round-up continued...

We have also been delighted to have the support of volunteers from JP Morgan who braved the elements to help our partners at SRUC with some tree tube removal and other tasks to help protect areas of tree planting from the blustery Scottish weather. They have also been out helping to tidy up the Tyndrum Community Shelterbelt. Under the guidance of members of the Strathfillan Community Development Trust, they did some maintenance on the Gruffalo Trail statues, cleared the paths, created some habitat piles and cleaned up and helped put temporary gates on the outdoor classroom. It was already being enjoyed by a young family within a couple of hours of finishing.

Next, they will be also turning their hand to some seed collecting in the autumn months. We also have some volunteer days lined up with students from Forth Valley College. It's heartening to have so many hands willing to help with Wild Strathfillan projects and in the next few weeks we hope to have some more volunteers signing up to be involved.



New relict populations of rare Montane Willows discovered in Glen Lochay

Findings from a recent survey of Glen Lochay Estate, and its implications for mountain woodland restoration across Wild Strathfillan.

We're delighted to share a special article with you from Innes Manders (vegetation ecologist) who argues the case for more surveys in Wild Strathfillan.

Montane willows are a set of specialist shrub species adapted to arctic and sub-alpine habitats. In Scotland, montane willows have been restricted to fragile relict populations on crags and ledges by browsing and grazing. The high-altitude scrub vegetation composed of these species is described by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee as "one of the UK's most rare and endangered habitats". The isolated and restricted nature of these habitats, combined with the difficulty of surveying these areas, means the distribution of montane willows across large areas of Scotland remains poorly surveyed. In short, we do not know the extent and conditions of many montane scrub populations.

Breadalbane, alongside the Cairngorms, is recognised for its montane willow scrub populations with several areas recognised for supporting montane scrub rich habitats including Ben Heasgarnich, Ben Lawers, Ben Lui and Meall na Samhna Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Outside of these areas, the Breadalbane area remains under-surveyed for montane willow scrub.

Prior to our recent survey of Glen Lochay Estate there were 79 records of montane willows in the area, mostly within Ben Heasgarnich SAC. Many of these records were several decades old, and even where populations had been more recently surveyed the size and condition of these populations was unknown.

This summer we carried out an in-depth survey of the estate to assess the state of existing montane willow populations within the glen. Along with a full census of existing populations, we discovered many previously unrecorded populations, including some which showed signs of natural regeneration.

Our survey of Glen Lochay Estate found four of Scotland's five native specialist montane willow species remain present in the area, as well as dark-leaved willow (*Salix myrsinifolia*), a submontane shrub. Across these species, we identified over 1100 individuals, mostly from newly discovered populations. These records mean **Glen Lochay is one of the most important sites for montane willows in Scotland.**



Two of the areas surveyed were found to support populations which are nationally significant. We counted over 150 net-leaved willows (*Salix reticulata*) at a site in Coire Cheathaich, suggesting Glen Lochay may be the most important population of this species in Scotland outside of Ben Lawers NNR. At Creag nan Bodach, an extensive crag outside of the SSSI and SACs with only one previous record, we found over 250 downy willows (*Salix lapponum*). Unusually, these populations appear to be sufficiently large and protected from intense browsing, possibly due to recent removal of sheep and management of deer numbers that saplings are regenerating away from the crags.

Downy willow (*Salix lapponum*) clusters with multiple large individuals of varying forms are common across Creag nan Bodach, Glen Lochay Estate.

The regeneration is perhaps the start of a recovery of montane willows in Glen Lochay. Our survey will form the baseline for a programme of montane willow scrub habitat restoration across Glen Lochay Estate to be led by a partnership between the Ripa Gar Foundation and the James Hutton Institute.

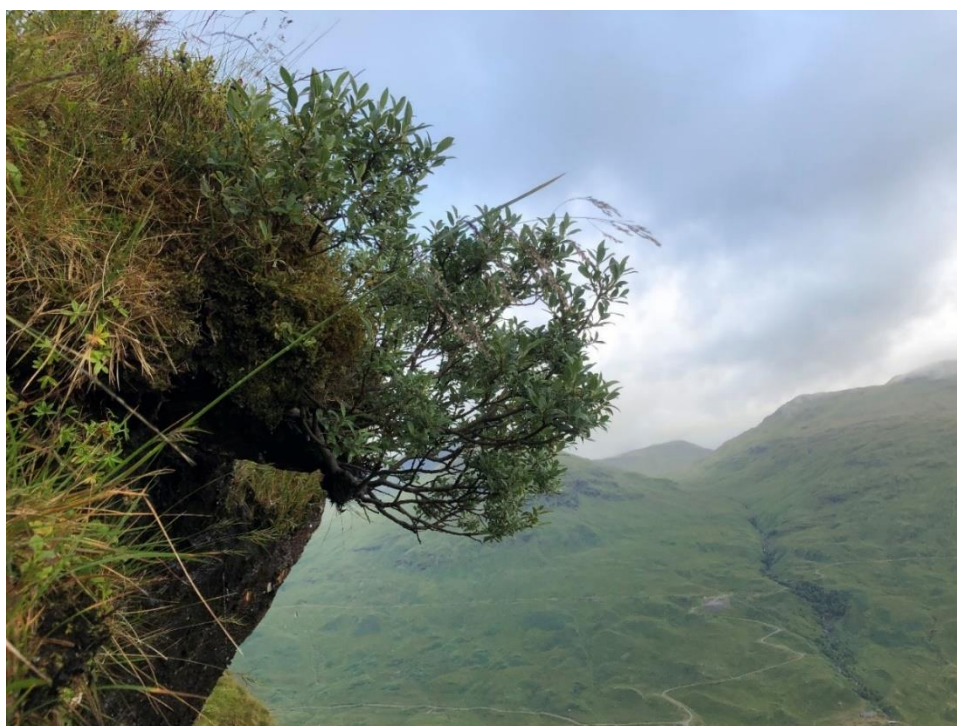
A recent increase in appreciation of the many benefits of montane woodland for people and biodiversity, is particularly relevant to the Wild Strathfillan area: the area is one of only two areas in Scotland where all five montane willow specialist species are present and the Calcium-rich geology makes it the most important area for *Salix reticulata* (net-leaved willow) and *Salix arbuscula* (mountain willow). Combined with the pioneering work at Ben Lawers NNR, this suggests the Wild Strathfillan area has the potential to become a nationally important hub of mountain woodland habitat restoration.

Survey conducted by Innes Manders and Julia Stewart on behalf of James Hutton Institute- Ripa Gar Foundation partnership with support from Dr. Stuart Smith (James Hutton Institute) and Sarah Watts (University of Stirling, Corrour Estate).

For further information please contact: innesmanders205@gmail.com



There are several large patches of net-leaved willow (*Salix reticulata*) like this between 800 and 900m asl in Coire Cheathaich, Glen Lochay Estate.



A downy willow (*Salix lapponum*) bush on the South side of Glen Lochay Estates. Before this survey no montane willows had been recorded in this area

Join the Countryside Trust Team

Two exciting new roles *for sharing!*



We are inviting potential candidates for our new and exciting role as **People Engagement Manager** which will develop, manage and be responsible for a portfolio of engagement activities which foster connections with nature and connections with each other.

This will include strategic development and on-going funding for our existing programmes of work (Walk in the Park, Wild Strathfillan and Active Travel) as well as a particular focus on supporting our landscape scale nature

restoration plans, by working with key partners and stakeholders to manage and deliver our people and skills focused programme of activity.

To find out more click [here](#) for the full job description, Click [here](#) for how to apply!



The second of our new roles is our **Partnership Support Officer** to help our nature restoration team deliver partnership projects as part of our Wild Strathfillan programme of activity.

Working in close partnership with local land managers, local communities, Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority and a range of public, private, and voluntary sector organisations, this role will involve supporting the delivery of a range of

projects across the Wild Strathfillan Initiative area. Candidates are likely to have a background/ interest in nature conservation and experience with of supporting project delivery and working with partners. A working knowledge of horticulture, nature restoration or land management principles would be beneficial.

To find out more click [here](#) to read the full job description. Click [here](#) for how to apply!



Get in touch!

If you'd like to get involved, volunteer with us or find out more about Wild Strathfillan, please contact Project Development Manager, Ellie Mayhew.



Ellie Mayhew

Project Development Manager – Nature Restoration

Email: ellie@trustinthepark.org

Mobile: 07871 735294

Contribute to our next bimonthly Partner Newsletter

If you've got a local wildlife sighting, news story or opportunity you'd like to share with Wild Strathfillan partners, get in touch! Contact details above – the next issue is due in November 2024.

Follow Us

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