



Partner Newsletter

Issue 9
September 2025

LOCH LOMOND
& THE TROSSACHS
COUNTRYSIDE
TRUST





Image: Juvenile stonechat © Gareth Keff

Welcome

Thanks for joining us for our 9th newsletter edition, featuring updates from our team and partners.

In this issue, we're thrilled to welcome marketing and media consultant Paul Saunders to the Wild Strathfillan adventure as part of our **Stories of the Land** project (pages 7 to 8). We're also taking a moment to celebrate the buzzing success of Wild Strathfillan's summer term **education activities** (pages 11 to 12).

What birds call Wild Strathfillan's native woodlands home? Our latest **survey** takes flight through glens and forest to uncover which species are nesting where (pages 9 to 10). Also, keep reading to find out how you can help shape **herbivore monitoring** in Strathfillan as we invite you to take our quick **questionnaire** (page 4).

Marking a key step in nature restoration efforts read about a new deer fence installation at **Crom Allt Gorge**, north of Tyndrum, to protect rare plant species like Purple Saxifrage and Globeflower and help the area's biodiversity thrive through natural woodland regeneration (page 6). Finally, we invite you to our **Annual Gathering** on the 12th November to share and celebrate the progress and successes of the initiative over the last year (page 5).

Thanks for reading, and don't forget you can submit your own updates for our next issue – we'd love to hear from you (page 13).

With best wishes,

The Wild Strathfillan team

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Wild Strathfillan

Restoring nature in the National Park



Wild Strathfillan is a nature restoration initiative working across the north of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park to deliver **a resilient, dynamic and connected landscape where people and nature thrive together.**

The initiative is led by Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Countryside Trust and is underpinned by a diverse and committed partnership, bringing together land managers, communities, statutory bodies, educational institutions and businesses who share an interest in restoring nature across the landscape and supporting rural communities.

The initiative is currently delivering a series of ambitious activity programmes, grounded in the landscape's rich natural and cultural heritage. These are focused around three main themes:

- **Nature recovery**
- **Nature connectedness**
- **Sustainable livelihoods**

Our active projects are **'The People and Nature of Wild Strathfillan'**, funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, and **'From Lochside to Mountain-top'**, funded by NatureScot through their Nature Restoration Fund, both of which run to 2026.

To find out more about the initiative and the work we are collectively delivering, visit the [Wild Strathfillan webpage here](#).

#WildStrathfillan

This project is supported by the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by [NatureScot](#) and, with thanks to National Lottery players, by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.





Image: Countryside Trust Team – Tree ID learning © Trust in the Park.

Notice Board

- **Land manager herbivore questionnaire**

As part of the Wild Strathfillan initiative, we are reaching out to land managers across the area to help build a clearer picture of how herbivore populations and their impact are currently monitored. We've developed a short 5-10 minute questionnaire to gather information on the techniques used to monitor wild and domestic herbivores, the frequency of those efforts, and any training or support needs. The aim is to better understand current practices and identify where resources or collaboration could strengthen monitoring across the landscape.

All information will be handled in accordance with GDPR regulations and used exclusively for the purposes of this project. Please [click here to complete the survey](#) or scan the QR code. We greatly appreciate your time, experience, and local knowledge. If you have any questions, comments, or would prefer to discuss your input directly, please contact Ophelie at ophelie@trustinthepark.org.



- **Last Chance to Share Your Thoughts on How We Work Together**

Back in July we met with some of you to discuss draft plans for how we all work together – the governance structure that will underpin the Wild Strathfillan initiative going forwards.

Many of you have shared your thoughts and feedback to help us shape the draft into a final document, which has been really helpful. **It would be great if everyone who wants to has the chance to review and comment on the documents**, so if you would like to but haven't done so already, please get in touch with our Nature Restoration Advisor, Ellie Mayhew, on ellie@trustinthepark.org for a phone call, Microsoft Teams chat, or to share your thoughts by email by **Friday 17 October**. Following this, we'll be working on finalising the documents and then we'll be in contact to discuss signing up to the new framework.

- **Event – Save a date!**

Wednesday 12 November - You're Invited to our Annual Gathering

Following our successful all-partner event in September 2024, we'd love if you could join us for our 2025 annual update and networking event. This is an opportunity for those interested in Wild Strathfillan to come together as we share and celebrate the progress and successes of the initiative over the last year.

Please note previous "save the dates" were circulated for 15 October. This has now been rescheduled and will take place in November.

Date: Wednesday 12th November

Time: 10:30am – 12:30pm (with tea and coffee from 10am; optional free lunch and site visit to follow)

Venue: Best Western, The Crianlarich Hotel, FK20 8RW.

If you're delivering projects in and around Wild Strathfillan and would like to share more information on the day or facilitate a discussion with partners and stakeholders, please let us know!

Invites & Registration:

We will be circulating direct invitations and full information on the day's schedule shortly. In the meantime, please register your interest with info@trustinthepark.org to ensure you're first to hear further updates!



Image: Deer fence around Crom Allt Gorge © Trust in the

Partner Update

Protecting Crom Allt Gorge

The Countryside Trust and **Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)** are excited to share an important update from our ongoing nature restoration efforts in the local area. A **new deer fence has been erected around 5.85 hectares** of land at **Crom Allt Gorge**, just north of Tyndrum. This land is leased by SRUC as part of their Kirkton & Auchtertyre Farms.

This special site is home to rare plant species like **Purple Saxifrage** and **Globeflower**, which are sensitive to grazing. The new fence will help protect these plants and allow **natural woodland regeneration** to begin, supporting a wider range of biodiversity over time.

The enclosure will also provide the right conditions for planting willow species – a step towards restoring montane woodland habitat, which has become fragmented across much of the Highlands.



While grazing is a key part of upland land use and culture, this small enclosure offers a way to balance farming and conservation, giving certain habitats a chance to recover in areas where natural regeneration would otherwise be very difficult.

We are hoping that this site will also act as a **learning and sharing space**, helping to inspire other land managers who may have similar opportunities on their land.

Image: Inside Crom Allt Gorge

This is a small but meaningful step toward a more biodiverse and resilient Strathfillan, and we look forward to sharing more updates as the site begins to grow and change.

To find out more please feel free to get in touch via Sophia@trustinthepark.org



Images: (Left and right) from Strathfillan Archive, (centre) © PaulSaunders

Stories of the Land

Paul Saunders Joins the Wild Strathfillan Vision

Stories of the Land is a key project for **Wild Strathfillan**, which looks to explore the past, present and what the future could look like for the Strathfillan and Killin communities and landscapes. The project is celebrating these “stories of the land” by recording and collating oral histories from residents, collecting and archiving pictures and materials, and sharing what we find including online and through an exhibition next year.

We recently appointed Paul Saunders to work with Strathfillan Community Development Trust (SCDT) and Killin and Ardeonaig Trust (KAT) on this project over the next 10 months. As Paul will be completing and review lots of interviews for the project, we briefly turned the tables to ask him some questions first

Q: “Can you tell us a little about yourself & your background?”

Paul: *I’ve been running my own marketing and media consultancy in Drymen for the past 15 years, working on all sorts of projects across Scotland. Before that, I spent 20 years in radio, ending up as Programme Director at Radio Clyde where I helped bring the station back to its number one spot. Living in the National Park is a real privilege, and while I take on work all over the country, I always enjoy being involved in projects here at home.*

Q: “What drew you to the Stories of the Land project?”

Paul: I've always been fascinated by stories and heritage, so this project really spoke to me. Some of the most enjoyable work I've done has been about researching and sharing stories for clients such as West Highland Way, the Steamship Sir Walter Scott at Loch Katrine, and Celebrating Park People and their Stories with the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs. Stories of the Land felt like a perfect chance to do more of that.

Q: “What are you most looking forward to on this project?”

Paul: I can't wait to meet people in the local communities and hear their stories – whether they're about family, work, or simply the landscape itself. The area is so rich in history and experience, and I'm looking forward to discovering tales that maybe haven't been told widely before.

Q: “What impact do you hope Stories of the Land will have?”

Paul: For me, the most important thing is that we capture and celebrate these stories, so they aren't lost for future generations. They help us understand how people have lived with the land, how those connections have changed over time, and why the landscapes still mean so much today. I hope the project leaves something lasting that both locals and visitors can connect with for many years to come.

Q: “What's your favourite spot in the project area?”

Paul: That's such a hard one – there are so many! Cycling towards Killin along NCN7 and crossing the Glen Ogle Viaduct is always special. I also love walking the West Highland Way around Tyndrum, where you get a real sense of the changing landscapes between Loch Lomond and Glencoe as you head deeper into the Highlands.

Have you got a story? We'd love to hear from you!

We're really excited to have Paul involved and to see Stories of the Land develop over the next year. If you've got a story you'd like to tell or information or photos you'd like to share, please feel free to get in touch via Sarah@trustinthepark.org.



Images: (Left to right) Dipper, Buzzard, Siskin © Gareth Kett

Species Habitat Spotlight

Breeding Bird Survey of Wild Strathfillan

The Wild Strathfillan project area is visually striking, with winding rivers tumbling through beautiful glens nestled between awe-inspiring mountains. Inter-dispersed through these glens are patches of native woodland, but if you were to look for more continuous woodland you would mainly find Sitka Spruce forestry plantations. While some wildlife, including a variety of bird species do well in these plantations, we wanted to find out what birds live and breed in the native woodland patches. This information could then be used to evaluate the impact of habitat restoration work on woodland bird species.

“ Encouragingly, across the six woodlands surveyed 59 species of breeding bird, including 12 red listed species and 16 amber listed species were recorded....”

The six largest patches of native woodland across the Wild Strathfillan project area were used for the survey*; the pine dominated woodlands of Glen Falloch Pinewoods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Tyndrum Community Woodlands, the ancient oak dominated woodlands of Glen Falloch Oakwoods SSSI and Inneschewan Woods SSSI and the mixed woodland of Auchlyne Estate and Glen Lochay Woods SSSI. A 1km long transect was established in each woodland with early and late breeding season surveys subsequently being conducted along each of the transects. Sightings and bird songs and calls were used to detect the species present.



Image: Pied flycatcher © Gareth Kett

Encouragingly, across the six woodlands surveyed 59 species of breeding bird, including 12 red listed species and 16 amber listed species* were recorded, indicating that even small patches of woodland across the Wild Strathfillan area support a diverse range of birds. Some of the highlights were spotted and pied flycatchers, redstarts, wood warblers and black grouse.

Of course this is just one year's survey results, but our hope is that as restoration progresses and connectivity between native woodlands increases, the bird species present in the woodlands will increase in number and spread across the project area, creating more robust populations, which will play important roles in forest ecology such as dispersing seed and nutrients, protecting trees by keeping caterpillar population balanced and providing prey for woodland predators.

“Some of the highlights were spotted and pied flycatchers, redstarts, wood warblers and black grouse”.

Many thanks to all the landowners who supported this survey and allowed surveyors into their land.

Notes:

* Not including Tyndrum Pinewoods, which was surveyed by local ecologist John Holland.

**The British Trust for Ornithology assess birds in the UK under the criteria of *historical decline, recent trends in population and range, population size, localisation and international importance of each species, as well as its global and European threat status*. Species are then placed on the Red (greatest conservation concern), Amber (unfavourable conservation status) or Green (favourable conservation status) list



Image: Crianlarich PS Eco Club presentation © Trustinthepark

Connecting Generations Through Bumblebees Eco Club meets Strength and Balance

As our Education and Engagement Officer starts another term working with Crianlarich and Killin Primary Schools, we've been reflecting on some of the brilliant education activities Wild Strathfillan supported before the summer.

We were delighted to work alongside staff from the National Trust for Scotland and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park to support both Primary Schools to achieving their **Bumblebee Friendly School Award**. We ran sessions on pollination and bumblebee identification and helped both schools plant some flowers and herbs that will hopefully attract more bees to the school grounds.

Wild Strathfillan also supports Loch Lomond and the Trossach's Countryside Trust's supported walking offer – our volunteer led Walk in the Park in Killin, and Strength and Balance classes in Killin and Crianlarich. Our supported walking activities help participants to build or maintain their mobility and confidence, spending time with each other, and in nature, and Strength and Balance is an important stepping stone in this.

**“The kids done an excellent job in their presentation.
They knew so much and shared it confidently with us.”**

– Strength and Balance participant.

We were excited to facilitate a special visit from participants of Crianlarich Strength and Balance class to the Primary School. The visit was organised to give the school's Eco Club, who were leading the bumblebee project, an opportunity to showcase what they had learnt through the summer term.

The Eco Club pupils delivered an excellent and engaging presentation to their guests about different species of bumblebees.

“The visit was a fantastic opportunity for **intergenerational learning, connection, and community engagement.”**

The visit also gave an opportunity for the pupils to learn about the importance of strength, balance and movement - they had even adapted one of their classroom games so it could be played seated around a table, ensuring everyone could join in. The two mixed-age teams raced to match bee species with the correct colour and stripe combinations — and competition was fierce!

The pupils also proudly took their visitors into the school grounds to show them the pollinator-friendly plants they've been growing. They explained how these plants will attract more bees in the future and shared advice on selecting pollinator-friendly species. It was wonderful to see how confidently the children shared their learning and answered questions.

The visit was a fantastic opportunity for **intergenerational learning**, connection, and community engagement. It was clear that both the pupils and the Strength and Balance group gained a great deal from the experience. As we plan this Academic year, we hope this is the first of many opportunities to connect with nature and each other.

To find out more about any of our educational opportunities, please feel free to get in touch via sharon@trustinthepark.org.

Strength & Balance Sessions



Join us for this fun, sociable session, and stay for a cuppa and a chat afterwards. No booking required

- **Killin | Wednesday's 2.00pm – 3.00pm** Killin & Ardeonaig Parish Church.
- **Crianlarich | Thursday's 2.00pm – 3.00pm** Crianlarich Village Hall

To find out more about our Strength & Balance sessions, please feel free to get in touch via Fiona@trustinthepark.org

Get in touch!

If you'd like to get involved, volunteer with us or find out more about Wild Strathfillan, please contact us below:

Contributions 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 – the next issue is due on 30 November 2025.

Email: info@trustinthepark.org

To find out more about volunteering please email Sharon Cawston, Education and Engagement Officer:

Email: Sharon@trustinthepark.org



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