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SCOTTISH BIODIVERSITY FORUM

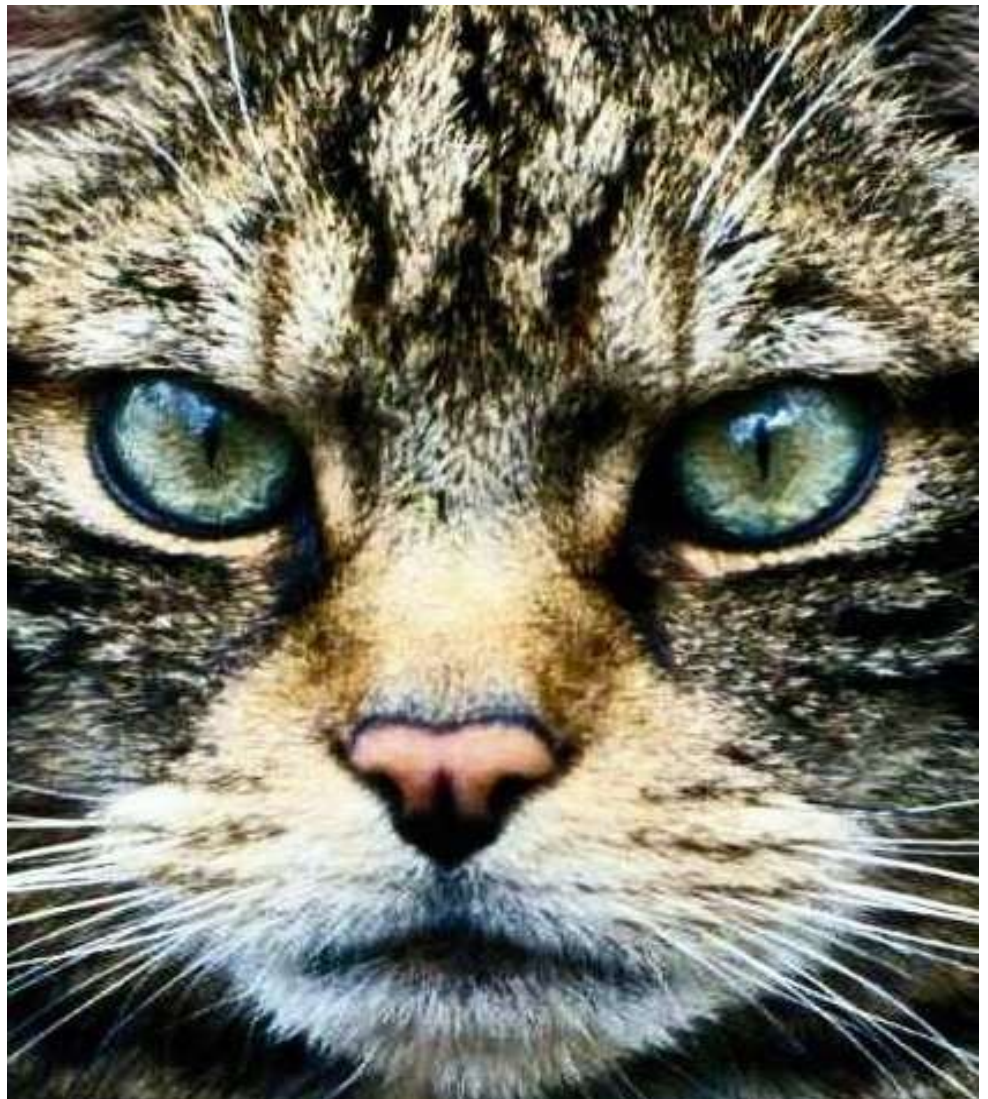
THE FORUM

## Scotland's Biodiversity: **Wildcat Conservation Action Plan Launched**

Five areas of Scottish wildcat habitat are to be targeted in a new £2m conservation project.

The species is facing extinction, threatened by habitat loss, disease and cross breeding with feral cats. The Heritage Lottery Fund has offered to give £873,000 towards Scottish Natural Heritage's action plan. A programme of neutering and vaccinating feral cats will be done as part of the project in areas of Aberdeenshire, Highlands and Tayside.

In the future, SNH may allow wildcats to be trapped for a captive breeding and reintroduction programme and The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and the Aspinall Foundation are leading plans for a conservation breeding programme.

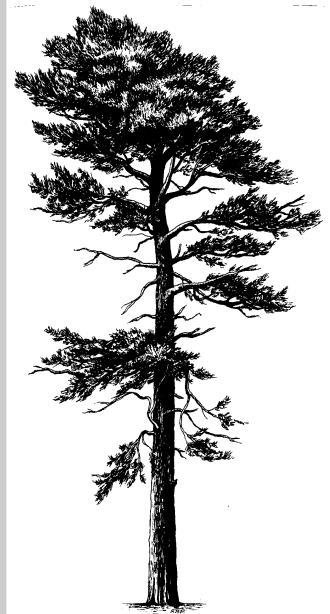




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## Contact details

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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SCOTTISH  
BIODIVERSITY  
FORUM

## Hope for Wildcat survival...

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Environment Minister Paul Wheelhouse has welcomed the offer of lottery funding for the SNH plan. As well as neutering feral cats, SNH will work with land managers to help reduce risks to wildcats. There will also be a Scotland-wide awareness raising campaign helping people understand the threats to the animal and what domestic cat owners can do to help.

Mr Wheelhouse said: "The Scottish wildcat is an iconic species that is emblematic of the wild parts of Scotland. As a society we have a legal and moral obligation to try and conserve the species, so that it continues to be part of our natural heritage for generations to come."



The Heritage Lottery Fund has also awarded a grant of £422,400 to a project which will directly involve 28,000 people in conserving Scotland's amphibian and reptile species. Collectively known as herptiles, there are 10 native species in Scotland. Seven are priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. These include the great-crested newt and the natterjack toad.

SNH wildlife ecologist Jenny Bryce said it was an important project. "Conserving wildcats arouses passion in many people, and the HLF's involvement will go a long way to safeguarding this most elusive of our wild mammals. The next stage is to ensure that the project is well-designed and delivers the most benefit for wildcats. This funding will help to ensure this work gets under way."



# For Freshwater Users—Invasive Species ID guide

We are proud to launch a handy waterproof, pocket sized 'danglebook' aimed at freshwater users in Scotland's central belt. It has clear images and the key identification features of the seventeen most threatening invaders—some of which we know are here and some we hope never to see.

The book can be easily tucked into your fishing bag or sailing kit ready for you to use if you should see something unusual. If you think you have recognised something from the guide, take a photograph if you can and let us know the location. If we do have a new invasive species, knowing it is here is the first step to a fast response. We can then take action, hopefully containing it and preserving our wonderful freshwater habitats.



**Japanese Knotweed**  
(*Fallopia japonica*) also **Giant Knotweed and hybrid species**  
(*F. sachalinensis* and *F. x bohemica*)

Tall plant with lush green, shield shaped leaves and bamboo like stems that are often purple speckled.

Forms dense thickets usually on disturbed ground, in urban areas or along water bodies. Can be found in almost any habitat. Very adaptable and tenacious.

**!! Do not cut or strim !!**



**Killer Shrimp**  
(*Dikerogammarus villosus*)

Large shrimp up to 3 cm, the main identification feature of which is the cone shaped protrusions near the base of the tail.

Found in still or flowing freshwater and brackish water, often among hard surfaces or vegetation. Can survive up to 15 days in damp conditions.

## Check, Clean, Dry.

Help protect the environment by following three simple steps when you leave the water.



**CHECK** your equipment and clothing for live plants and animals - particularly in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.



**CLEAN** and wash all equipment, footwear and clothing thoroughly.



**DRY** all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

If you would like a copy of the guide, please contact [biodiversity@snh.gov.uk](mailto:biodiversity@snh.gov.uk) with Freshwater INNS guide in the title. If you would rather use technology try one of the apps developed by the naturelocator team such as PlantTracker or record on-line e.g. using iRecord. Both of these are excellent and very simple ways to submit records using your mobile phone.

## Featured Fungus — *Geastrum triplex* (Collared Earthstar)

Earthstars are a stunning group within the basidiomycetes that use a similar spore dispersal mechanism as the puffballs. The outer 'skin' peels back and effectively acts as a little stand to raise the spore containing 'ball' higher into the air currents. Raindrops and passing animals will knock the spore sac causing the spores to puff out of the little hole (ostiole) in the top.

The distinguishing feature of *G. triplex* gives it its common name 'collared earthstar'. The thick outer cover that protects the spore sac in its early stages, splits as it ages. The outer part goes on to create the 'stand' and the inner layer forms the distinct collar that you can see in the images below.

[Geastrum quadrifidum](#) has previously been featured as it was new to Scotland, with the site near Blairgowrie still being the only one recorded. *G. triplex* is found much more regularly but has an interesting, and mostly southern distribution in Scotland. It would be interesting to see just how far up the east coast it fruits (see distribution below).

Find out more about the [different divisions](#) within the kingdom of the fungi.



All images ©  
S. Daniels



**Fruiting:** Records of this are reported from all times of the year. It seems that most earthstars are in good condition in the autumn and early winter and that other records are of the old fruit body which dries out and often remains perfectly recognisable into the following year. This hugely extends the period when recording can take place - unusual for fungi!

**Habitat:** On well drained soils, often amongst leaf litter; usually in deciduous woodland. Known also from dunes, gardens, roadside verges and underneath bracken or conifers.

**Distribution:** It is thought to be common in England and the Republic of Ireland but found occasionally everywhere else. In Scotland it is known from across the Central Belt, is locally abundant in East Lothian, but does not appear further north than Fife. The most recent record from St. Andrews makes one wonder exactly how far up the east (or indeed the west) coast this species can be found.



## East Coast Eagles Make History

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Project officer Rhian Evans with chick© RSPB

For the first time in almost two centuries white-tailed sea eagles have bred in the east of mainland Scotland. Conservationists confirmed that a pair released in 2009 as part of a successful reintroduction project, have raised one chick in a Forestry Commission Scotland wood in Fife. Between 2007-2012, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland, with additional financial support from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Fife and Rural Tayside LEADER Programme 2007-2013, reintroduced a total of 85 eagles to Scotland's east coast. Their progress and whereabouts continue to be regularly monitored by project staff and volunteers. Having found a safe and secure home, the adult pair successfully reared a healthy male chick which was fitted with a leg ring and white wing tags with black numbering, earlier this summer by trained and licensed ringing experts.

Minister for Environment and Climate Change Paul Wheelhouse said: "This is fantastic news – it is the first chick in almost two hundred years to be hatched on the mainland of the east coast, which was the ultimate aim of the reintroduction project. I hope it will be the first of many of this magnificent species which will eventually spread their territories right across Scotland. I'd like to thank all partners who have played their part in making this exciting and special event happen."



## Reintroduction project celebrates flight of first wild chick

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Stuart Housden, Director of RSPB Scotland, said: "This chick marks a huge milestone in our partnership to restore white-tailed eagles to their former range in the south and east of the country. This success further strengthens the strong bond we have formed with the people of Norway, who kindly gifted birds for release in Scotland throughout the reintroduction process, which started over 30 years ago on the West coast. Young birds successfully released 5-6 years ago are now pairing up in the wild-and we are very excited a chick from a nest in Fife has safely fledged. We owe a great deal to the project staff, farmers, landowners, partners and of course the general public for their support and enthusiasm. Our focus now will be to continue monitoring this youngster and the other east coast birds with the expectation of more breeding attempts next year. These wonderful birds are back! As always project officer Rhian Evans is keen for any east Scotland eagle sightings to be reported to her at [eastscotlandseaeagles@rspb.org.uk](mailto:eastscotlandseaeagles@rspb.org.uk)"

Ron Macdonald, SNH's Head of Policy & Advice, said: "After almost 200 years, it's wonderful to have a sea eagle chick fledge again in the east of Scotland. With the west coast eagles already established, this is a good step towards a healthy population of sea eagles across the country."



Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery

Fund, Scotland, said: "The arrival of this chick marks the beginning of a new era for the sea eagles in the east coast of Scotland. The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to be involved in reversing the fate of these rare, once native, birds. They are part of Scotland's natural heritage and it is the prospect of glimpsing rare species, such as the glorious sea eagle, that attracts visitors to our shores bringing much-needed tourist income to our communities."

Once a regular sight in Scotland's skies, the white-tailed eagle was driven to extinction in the Victorian era. The last native white-tailed eagle was killed on Shetland in 1918. The species only returned to the UK following a successful reintroduction to the West of Scotland, starting on the Island of Rum in 1975. As well as helping return the UK's largest birds of prey, the project has also strengthened links between Scotland and Norway, where the sea eagle population is strong. Project staff worked closely with Norwegian colleagues visiting nesting sites and selecting suitable chicks to use for the East Scotland reintroduction. Although the majority of the Scottish population remains on the west of the country, the species is now regularly spotted in eastern and central Scotland too.

**For further information and to arrange an interview, please contact:** Louise Smith, RSPB Scotland media & communications officer: 0131 317 4136 or 07540 121 457

# Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust (HWDT)

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There has been a confirmed sighting of the west coast community of killer whales off Peterhead – the first time members of this small and highly unique population have been reported off Scotland’s east coast. Video footage of the sighting, by Peterhead man Ian Nash on 20 August, clearly shows a male whale known as ‘John Coe’ – identified by a very distinctive notch in his dorsal fin – along with another male and at least one female.

John Coe’s distinctive notch, allowed Sanna Kuningas of the Sea Mammal Research Unit to recognise the killer whale as part of the West Coast Community and alerted HWDT and Dr Andy Foote, who has extensively studied orca populations in the north east Atlantic as part of the North Atlantic Killer Whale ID (NAKID) project.

HWDT has been monitoring the movements of this group since the early 1990s, with sightings recorded mainly in the Hebrides as well as off Ireland and Wales. Following the sighting at Peterhead, the charity can now expand significantly the known range of these apex predators.

The west coast community is a unique group of orca in the north-east Atlantic. The entire population is comprised of just five males and four females, and no calves have ever been recorded in the two decades HWDT has been monitoring the group. Following research conducted by Dr Andy Foote, it was confirmed that the west coast community never interact with other populations of the north east Atlantic and are actually morphologically different; having different eye patch orientation to other populations found in the north east Atlantic. It is suspected that this small population prey exclusively on other cetaceans such as porpoise and minke whale. All these variables lead to a distinct and therefore highly vulnerable population of killer whales.

HWDT relies on members of the public to report sightings of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoise) and basking sharks. This enables a better understanding of the marine environment, both locally and in an international context. Members of the public who encounter a cetacean or basking shark, can contribute to HWDT’s community sightings network by reporting sightings online at: [www.hwdt.org](http://www.hwdt.org).



*Photo: © Nienke Van Geel, taken from aboard [Silurian](#) off Barra*



## Butterfly Conservation Scotland—Fast spreading butterfly surprises experts



Photo: © by Peter Eeles

The continued good weather has meant that records of the speckled wood butterfly are still coming into Butterfly Conservation's survey of Scotland's most rapidly spreading butterfly.

The speckled wood is expanding south from warm 'refuges' around the Moray Firth and the west coast that were colonised centuries ago and remained occupied, while the rest of Scotland became colder and unsuitable. But its rapid spread north from England into the Borders and Lothians has surprised Butterfly Conservation's scientists.

Paul Kirkland, Director of Butterfly Conservation Scotland, said: "We thought that the speckled wood might take 10 years to become established in the Central Belt, but at this rate it will happen in the next couple of years."

The distinctive butterfly of sunny, open woodland can be seen in sunny glades in woodland, as its name suggests.

As part of the Year of Natural Scotland 2013, Butterfly Conservation Scotland is asking the public to help them track the movement of this species. Much research has been done on the butterfly's behaviour and its reaction to climate warming and the records sent in by the public greatly help scientists carrying out their research.

Records can be submitted online at [www.butterfly-conservation.org/scottishspeckledwood](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/scottishspeckledwood)

**CONTACTS:** Paul Kirkland, Director, Butterfly Conservation Scotland,  
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Tel: 01540 661469 Mobile: 07979 785665



Scotland's Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse, has formally launched a consultation on whether Scotland should have a National Tree. Conservation charity Trees for Life welcomes growing calls for the Scottish Government and Parliament to establish a National Tree of Scotland, and would like them to choose the Scots pine.

The consultation on Scotland's national tree, requested by the Scottish Government, was launched by Forestry Commission Scotland in Edinburgh.

Alan Watson Featherstone, Trees for Life's Executive Director, said: "The growing campaign for the Scots pine to be proclaimed Scotland's National Tree is inspiring. The Scots pine is one of the world's most beautiful trees, a powerful symbol of Scotland and a keystone species of the Caledonian Forest, which in turn is one of the country's greatest national treasures.

"Declaring this remarkable and important species as our national tree in 2013, the year of Natural Scotland, would send a much-needed signal of support for Scotland's beleaguered forests, and would boost the development of a uniquely Scottish national identity. The Scots pine's natural range in the UK distinguishes Scotland from the rest of the country."

Over 70 countries around the world, from Canada to Denmark to South Africa, have National Trees that provide important symbols for their national identities.

**Ed. Note: the public consultation to nominate Scotland's national tree ends on the 3rd December 2013. Any species of tree can be nominated. You can nominate your choice at:**

## Scots pine to be National Tree for Scotland

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Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) is the largest and longest-lived tree in the Caledonian Forest, and forms a 'backbone' in the forest ecosystem on which many other species depend.

The tree provides a home for special wildlife, including red squirrels, capercaillie, crossbills and crested tits. It offers ideal nesting sites for ospreys, shelter for deer and pine martens, and shade for twinflower, one-flowered wintergreen and blaeberreries. The richly textured bark of a pine is a fantastic habitat for lichens, mosses and insects.

With increasing concerns about climate change, deforestation and biodiversity loss, the need for concerted action to conserve and regenerate Scotland's native woodlands is more important than ever before.

Today, only a fraction of the former Caledonian Forest survives, with its native pinewoods reduced to 35 isolated remnants. However, Trees for Life is restoring the forest to a wilderness region of 1,000 square miles in the Highlands to the west of Loch Ness and Inverness.

The bid to address Scotland's current lack of an official tree was begun by campaigner and Trees for Life supporter Alex Hamilton. MSPs began the consultation process on the 8th January this year, when the Public Petitions Committee heard Mr Hamilton's request that the Scottish Parliament urge the Scottish Government to proclaim the Scots Pine as the National Tree of Scotland. Alan Watson Featherstone accompanied Alex Hamilton at that committee meeting, adding Trees for Life's support for the proposal.

For details, see [www.treesforlife.org.uk](http://www.treesforlife.org.uk) or call 0845 458 3505.



# BEE a 'citizen scientist'



People from all over Britain can now become "citizen scientists" in their own back garden in what could be the biggest pollinator study ever, thanks to a recently launched mobile phone app, developed by Earthwatch in partnership with Waitrose and The Crown Estate.

You can download [Bee-friendly your Garden](#), and monitor the numbers and types of insects seen on the bushes and flowers in your garden around once a week. This data will become part of a project being carried out at the University of Sussex to gain important information about pollinators and the plants that they are attracted to.



The Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects (LASI) is working to extend practical knowledge about honey bees and social insects to beekeepers, industry, land managers, teachers and others.

Simon Barnes of Earthwatch said, *"Citizen science is a powerful tool as data is collected on a large scale. Once we understand the percentage of bee-friendly plants in people's gardens we can look at how to optimise that number, which will ease some of the pressure on pollinators. In the longer term Waitrose aims to be involved in the promotion of beneficial plants that are identified. Earthwatch has a long tradition of practicing citizen science through participation on its global research expeditions; this model is equally effective in your own back garden."*

The number of bees and butterflies in Britain has dropped severely over the last 20 years. We need insects to pollinate the crops that we rely on every day for our food. Consequently the app is of great interest to the popular supermarket, Waitrose.

Mark Gough, Head of Sustainability at the Crown Estate said, *"Without pollinators the cost of manual pollination would be immense, severely impacting food price. As one of the biggest agricultural landowners in the UK this is extremely relevant to our tenants. As well as building upon our existing bee projects across all of our business and promoting the app, we will be inspiring employees, managing agents, partners and customers to take part by offering them the chance to go on a one day Earthwatch 'bee-friendly' course at Sussex University and work with the scientists who are making this project happen."*



The innovative new initiative compliments other Earthwatch work into pollinators. On Earthwatch project [Butterflies and Bees in the Indian Himalayas](#), volunteers can work among the apple orchards of the Indian Himalayas, where their observations of plants, bees, and butterflies could help protect the region's sustainable agriculture in the face of climate change.

## Plantlife—Scottish Juniper Survey

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Plantlife Scotland is calling on people to take part in a new survey which will help determine the health of the ancient gin giving juniper bush that is under attack.

Juniper is in serious trouble. One of only three native conifers in Britain, not only does it face a deadly fungal disease (*Phytophthora austrocedrae*) it has also disappeared from over a third of Britain where it was previously found. Plantlife Scotland is now working with the Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage to find exactly how the juniper population in Scotland has been affected, and they need the public's help.

Deborah Long from Plantlife Scotland says “juniper with its blueish green needles and green or black berries is easy to identify. We are asking people to help us by completing a survey form every time they see Juniper in Scotland. If however you notice any orange or brown bushes, there may be a risk of infection by *Phytophthora austrocedrae*. If this happens people should document this on their survey form but ensure they do not walk around the area and clean mud thoroughly from their boots and equipment”



Juniper's decline in Scotland has been due to a combination of ageing bushes (many are over a century old, so producing fewer viable seeds), under-grazing (which prevents germination and suppresses seedlings) and locally booming rabbit and vole populations (which are voracious consumers of juvenile plants).

- Juniper is an important part of Scotland's landscape and culture:
- The fragrant wood was used as firewood as it burns well. It is also said to burn with less smoke and therefore was the preferred fuel for illegal whisky stills.
- Juniper's aromatic berries give gin its distinctive flavour, and are regularly used as an ingredient in game dishes.
- The prickly boughs were turned to advantage in the past and used as a substitute for barbed wire.
- The many medicinal qualities of juniper mean that in the Highlands in the past, it was used to treat almost every ailment. Oil extracted from juniper has an ancient reputation as an abortifacient – which perhaps explains another of its names, bastard's bane.

For details regarding how to take part in the survey please go to the Plantlife Scotland website:

[http://www.plantlife.org.uk/about\\_us/news\\_press/scottish\\_juniper\\_survey](http://www.plantlife.org.uk/about_us/news_press/scottish_juniper_survey)

## RSPB—CRANES RETURN TO SCOTLAND



For the first time since the Middle Ages, common cranes have bred in Scotland. The graceful birds, known for their tall stature, loud trumpeting calls and elegant breeding displays, have successfully raised two chicks within the last two years in north east Scotland, indicating conditions could be right for more of the species to settle in Scotland.

Small but increasing numbers of the

migratory birds, which spend their summers in northern Europe and winters in France and Spain, have passed through Britain in recent years with a small breeding population becoming established in Eastern England. However, these are the first confirmed successful nests north of the border for hundreds of years.

Historic records and place names indicate that cranes were once present in Scotland but died out centuries ago, primarily due to hunting and their popularity as a dish at medieval banquets. Habitat loss and a slow reproductive cycle may have also led to their disappearance. The species, which favours large wetland areas such as lowland peat bogs with an abundance of pools, appears to be benefitting from farming operations in the area which provide invertebrates, grains and other food and the right conditions to breed and successfully raise chicks.

Stuart Housden, Director of RSPB Scotland said: “We are stunned and delighted to see that common cranes have bred successfully in Scotland. These charming, elegant birds have a strong place in our myths and history and are a delight to see, particularly during the breeding season with their “dancing” displays. They undertake regular migrations and small numbers have turned up on the east coast of Scotland in recent years, raising hopes of a re-colonisation. Last year the pair reared one chick- followed by a second chick in 2013.

“Thanks to the co-operation of farmers in the area, the conditions appear to be right for cranes to take up residence and it is possible that more will choose to re-establish themselves in the country in future. “We have been working with local farmers, landowners and the community to monitor these fantastic birds. Despite their size and flamboyant breeding displays, cranes are secretive birds and are very sensitive to disturbance and we ask that they be given space and peace so they may establish a breeding population in Scotland.”

RSPB’s Loch of Strathbeg nature reserve, a major coastal wetland near Fraserburgh, is visited by cranes on spring migration and offers the best opportunity to see them doing their ‘dancing’ displays <http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide//lochofstrathbeg/>

## Environmental apprentices...you're hired!

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In mid September 2013 the Conservation Volunteers (TCV) began recruiting for the last cohort of Natural Talent Apprentices. Delivered since 2006 by The Conservation Volunteers (formerly BTCV) in Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Natural Talent Apprentice Scheme is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund training bursary programme and has been seen by many as a vital component in bridging the taxonomic skills gap.

As well as training in a taxonomic speciality or specialist habitat management, each apprentice learns a suite of transferable skills including events and project management, community and stakeholder engagement, budgeting and curating skills. And many of the apprentices benefit from 3 or 6 month extensions, funded by their host organisation.

The outcomes are excellent with 100% having gone on to use some or all of their new skills to benefit the environmental sector, 25 out of 32 'got hired' and are forging careers in the sector, 5 are undertaking or have completed PhD's and there are 8 apprentices currently in post.

Current apprenticeships include Natural Flood Management based at CRESS (<http://www.cress.stir.ac.uk>) in Stirling University, *Bryophytes of Scottish Temperate Rainforests* with Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, *Upland Ecosystems* with National Trust Scotland, *Urban Biodiversity* with Buglife, *Marine Zooplankton* with SEPA, and *Peatland Ecology* with RSPB. TCV have recently recruited for another 3 apprentices, including Soil Ecology at the Environmental Research Institute in Thurso, Caledonian Pinewoods at RSPB Abernethy and the James Hutton Institute and a Freshwater Invasive non native species apprenticeship with RAFTS

The scheme continues to be supported by partner organisations and experts who are keen to download their knowledge, handing over skills that are quickly diminishing in today's workforce. There is also support across the sector for a UK wide scheme to fill existing skills gaps and respond to the challenge of climate change and recreational, housing and development pressures.

You can learn more about Natural Talent, including a recent report of the programme, from the TCV web site [TCV Natural Talent](#) [TCV Natural Talent](#) on YouTube and Twitter [@Natural Talent](#), and hear from the apprentices in their own words at [TCV Natural Talent blog](#).

For more information, contact Kerry Riddell  
[k.riddell@tcv.org.uk](mailto:k.riddell@tcv.org.uk)  
Tel: 01848 200381



## NTS— St Kilda...

Swallows and Leach's storm petrels are the successes from St Kilda's bird breeding season this summer, conservation charity the National Trust for Scotland reports.

For the first time, a pair of migrating swallows has raised three chicks on the Hebridean island of Hirta. The nest was established in a garage operated by defence contractor, Qinetiq, who agreed to leave the doors open for the duration of the breeding season. Swallows are regular summer visitors to



St Kilda, but this is the first time that they have successfully raised young.

Meanwhile, efforts to monitor the breeding success of Leach's storm petrels received a boost when two chicks were successfully reared in artificial nest boxes. Last summer saw the first successful breeding in newly designed boxes and the continued growth in the numbers of birds using these boxes bodes well for the eventual possibility of tracking breeding success on a routine basis. The population of this species has been in serious decline on St Kilda since the late 1990s.

The St Kilda archipelago, which has been in the care of the National Trust for Scotland since 1957, is one of the UK's most important seabird colonies. Home to a huge range of species, it boasts the UK's largest puffin colony, with around 136,000 at the last full count. These popular and distinctive birds have had 'moderate breeding success' this summer.

The Trust's seabird ranger Gina Prior, who is based on St Kilda, said:

*IMAGES – ALL SHOTS  
BY GINA PRIOR*



“Our monitoring has found that the breeding success for puffins was at a similar level to last year with about 45 per cent of breeding pairs raising chicks. We'd be looking for around 70 per cent of nests to produce a chick ideally. If the current levels continue for the long term, then the population of the colony could start to decline as the number of chicks just won't replace the adults who are dying off.”

Although the breeding season is almost over, Gina's work continues as she helps ensure that the young birds make a safe departure from St Kilda.



## Swallows success and puffins static on St Kilda

She continued:

“Over the next few weeks, pufflings will leave their breeding burrows and return to sea. Some become disorientated by the lights from buildings and ground themselves on shore where they are unable to take flight again. I patrol the buildings at midnight and again at dusk to collect any stray young birds. Before release, they are measured and weighed and this data is the final piece of the ‘breeding success’ puzzle. The information is used as a measure of body condition which provides information on whether the birds are a healthy weight when they leave the colony.”



St Kilda is the UK's only natural and cultural World Heritage Site and lies 41 miles (66 km) west of Benbecula. Marking the end of thousands of years of human occupation, St Kilda's remaining population was famously evacuated to the mainland at their own request in 1930.

The archipelago was allocated World Heritage status by UNESCO in 1986 in recognition of its natural heritage, exceptional natural beauty and for the significant natural habitats that it supports. In July 2004 this was extended to include the surrounding marine environment and in 2005, recognition was also given to St Kilda's unique cultural landscape.



## Woolly willow MSP Champion sees conservation in practice

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Conservation experts at the National Trust for Scotland's Ben Lawers Nature Reserve have demonstrated their pioneering work to protect the woolly willow with Graeme Dey, the MSP who is its official champion

He was among the attendees at an EXPO event which took place on August 21<sup>st</sup> 2013. The event was showcasing the national and international ecological significance of Ben Lawers, its exemplary monitoring programme, the success of its pioneering habitat restoration and a whole range of conservation and visitor management issues. Conservation staff at Ben Lawers has been working to conserve montane willows including the woolly willow for decades. They have pioneered work to propagate and replant the rare shrub on the nature reserve. These willows were once common there, and across other areas of Scotland, but have been affected by over-grazing over the years.

Property Manager Helen Cole said: "Ben Lawers is rich in biodiversity and is particularly important for its alpine plants. Over the years, we've been trailblazing when it comes to protecting Scotland's woolly willows and it is a great opportunity to showcase all our hard work with its champion, Graham Dey MSP."

Graeme Dey MSP said: "I am very much looking forward to my visit and learning about the work being done by the National Trust for Scotland to protect the Woolly Willow. I've already witnessed the conservation efforts being made in Glen Doll in my own constituency of Angus South. It will be interesting to compare approaches and see for myself the progress being made at Ben Lawers."

Ben Lawers National Nature Reserve, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the European Habitats Directive for the exceptional examples of a number of habitats, rare on a European scale. One of the botanically richest mountains in Britain, Ben Lawers is widely known for its outstanding range and diversity of arctic-alpine species and vegetation types. It 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. The reserve is also hugely popular with hillwalkers owing to its Munros, scenery and accessibility.



## New conservation scheme to offer health & training opportunities in the Inverness area

A new programme of special Conservation Days designed to benefit disadvantaged people in the Inverness region has been launched by conservation charity Trees for Life thanks to funding from the People's Postcode Trust.

The new initiative will provide an opportunity for people completely new to conservation volunteering to learn about Scotland's Caledonian Forest and its rare species, and to take part in rewarding and effective conservation action in their local area. Volunteers taking part will be able to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of moderate regular exercise in a green natural environment, and to gain practical skills, knowledge and confidence to carry out conservation work. At the same time they will be helping to restore the Caledonian Forest, one of Scotland's greatest national treasures.

Volunteers will be able to join in a range of activities including planting trees and wild flowers, collecting seeds and roots for propagating rare species, growing trees and plants in Trees for Life's tree nursery, removing non-native species and carrying out biodiversity surveys.

The new scheme was made possible after Trees for Life was awarded £6,062 by People's Postcode Trust, a grant-giving charity, funded entirely by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

For further details see: [www.treesforlife.org.uk](http://www.treesforlife.org.uk) Tel: 0845 458 3505.



### **Biodiverse Brighter Bothwell**

At this year's Beautiful Scotland award ceremony, [Brighter Bothwell organic community garden](http://www.brighterbothwell.com) was awarded the Scottish Natural Heritage Biodiversity Award for its excellent conservation work.

With a motto of "Let's just do it", Brighter Bothwell (south Lanarkshire) is a worthy winner showcasing how food production and helping wildlife can go hand in hand. The garden is managed by a group of volunteers, the Organic Growers of Bothwell. Although it is a fairly new garden the efforts to help wildlife are fantastic. Projects include a bee border, an orchard, a pond, a bog garden, a wild flower meadow, wormeries, recycled water, solar panels and easy access raised beds (using their home-made compost)!



Well done to all those gardeners in Bothwell!

[www.brighterbothwell.com](http://www.brighterbothwell.com)

<http://bothwellcommunitygarden.wordpress.com/>

[www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org](http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org)

# Plan Bee Ltd.....



Glasgow-based Plan Bee Ltd, an Eco-innovation start-up, has been shortlisted as a finalist in the **Inspiring City Awards - PEOPLE MAKE GLASGOW**.

The inaugural awards, organised jointly by The Herald and Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, have been designed to celebrate inspiring individuals and organisations which have gone the extra mile to encourage investment and growth in Glasgow. Plan Bee has been shortlisted within the Environmental Award category which recognises an outstanding contribution to enhance Glasgow's environment and/or combating climate change within the country.

Plan Bee Ltd is an ambitious start-up that champions biodiversity. The company works in partnership with organisations to install and manage bee-keeping facilities across various sites. Not only does this significantly boost bee and other wildlife population, but it allows companies to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability through sales of on-site honey, uniquely labelled with each company's corporate livery. Key partners include the R&A's Royal Troon and Highland Spring Group.

Warren Bader, CEO Plan Bee Ltd, said "It is such an honour to have been shortlisted within this category and to receive recognition as an entrepreneur that is enhancing the environment of this vibrant and diverse city. I am very grateful for the nominations and I'd also like to thank the Plan Bee team for their hard work and enthusiasm since this exciting venture began."



## SHORTLISTED FOR A GLASGOW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARD

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This latest accolade follows an inspiring journey that has led to Plan Bee Ltd becoming recognised as a major contributor within the Eco-innovation sector. Launched just 18 months ago, it was shortlisted as one of the 100 most innovative and inspirational companies of 2012 by The Department for Business Skills and Innovation and has been widely acclaimed for its originality.

The awards were presented at a celebratory dinner on Wednesday September 11<sup>th</sup> at The Hilton Hotel in Glasgow. Scottish philanthropist and entrepreneur Sir Tom Hunter was the guest speaker for this inaugural event, hosted by The Herald and Glasgow Chamber of Commerce.



Following the launch of Scotland’s ambitious biodiversity plan, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced grants totalling £3.14m to enable the conservation of two large scale Scottish landscapes which will connect even more communities to their natural heritage. The distinctive volcanic landscape of the Lomond Hills in Fife has been awarded £1.71m while the ‘silvery’ Tay near Perth have received £1.43m through HLF’s Landscape Partnership (LP) programme.

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said:

“Our species and habitats are under constant threat. Recent reports such as State of Nature launched by Sir David Attenborough, and the Scottish Government’s 2020 Challenge for Scotland’s Biodiversity plan, highlight the need to act now if we are to protect our biodiversity and the massive contribution it makes to our economy. Nature lies at the very heart of what makes Scotland special but the enormous pressures upon it mean that we have to approach its restoration and conservation on a bigger scale than ever before. The LP programme does just that, and more. What communities have often already started on a small scale, HLF is delighted to take forward, bringing real cohesion to the natural and built heritage of a region and reconnecting people with what often lies overlooked on their doorstep.”

Environment and Climate Change Minister Paul Wheelhouse said:

“Scotland’s natural environment is iconic and admired across the world, but it’s also crucial to our way of life. It contributes to our economy, it is part of our identity and wellbeing, and our commitment to making a step change in how it is managed was set out in the recently published ‘2020 Challenge for Scotland’s Biodiversity’, our refreshed Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. We need to preserve our species and natural habitat for future generations. The two projects funded by the Heritage Lottery Funding aim to do just that and I warmly welcome the HLF’s investment in Scotland. The areas covered by the two projects are home to some of Scotland’s most fascinating species and the work carried out by local communities will protect those landscapes which are unique to their area and unique to Scotland.”



The Landscape Partnership is an innovative programme which helps conserve landscape by helping forge public and community partnerships. People work together, through many interlinked projects, to tackle the environmental needs of their local landscape, conserving and restoring the natural and built heritage while celebrating the history and heritage of the area.

[Reed beds on the River Tay](#)

## £3m to protect two diverse Scottish landscapes

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### **The Tay Landscape Partnership – Grant award £1,435,500**

The natural and cultural importance of the River Tay and its firth, to the east of Perth and including the Carse of Gowrie, has been for long undervalued and little understood by the public. The rift valley, which inspired Sir Patrick Geddes's vision of the Valley Section, is rich in biodiversity, agriculture, and history, and so an ideal setting in which to bring culture and environment together. It contains the largest single area of reed-beds in the UK while the river contains the greatest volume of freshwater of any UK river. Its wetlands, drained by medieval monks, were the home of massive orchards which in more recent times have given way to Tayside's famous soft fruit industry. They are also an important breeding site, particularly for the rare bearded tit, water rail (a highly secretive small bird) and marsh harrier.

The Landscape Partnership Scheme, led by Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust and Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust, covers an area of 250km<sup>2</sup> and will involve over 40 organisations in delivering 29 projects. The scheme will include a programme of archaeological excavations, and the protection and enhancement of the distinctive clay buildings of the Carse of Gowrie, while the surviving historic orchards will be protected. Access to the Tay will be improved with new path networks and other initiatives to encourage people down onto the river. Many volunteers will be involved in carrying out the works while community and school events such as orchard festivals, talks and workshops will engage the public in the area's landscape and history.

### **The Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership – Grant award £1,709,800**

The Living Lomonds focuses on a 138km<sup>2</sup> area of Fife taking in the Lomond Hills and contrasting communities to the north and south of them, including Falkland, Scotland's first conservation village and historic mining communities such as Benarty. The hills, dominated by two distinctive volcanic plugs and the lowland plain between are home to significant cultural and natural heritage and support a wide variety of wildlife such as ospreys, peregrine falcons, hen harriers, red squirrels and green tiger beetles.

Led by Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, the Landscape Partnership aims to reconnect people with the hills so that they can understand, enjoy and celebrate the built and natural heritage that they share. Woodlands, dry-stone walls and historic walking routes will be

restored and new all access paths created. Volunteering, training and employment opportunities will be created in heritage skills while a programme of activities such as the re-enactment of a medieval deer hunt and exploring the Lomond's heritage through place names aim to provide a stronger connection between people and the landscape.



**Green tiger beetle**

# Scottish Nature Festival 2013....

1st prize winner—Kathy Buckner—Bird on the wire



Kathy Buckner's photo 'bird on the wing' captures the moment an adult swallow momentarily hovers in front of its chick as it passes its food parcel into the chick's gaping mouth whilst another screaming chick looks on. It's a simple image shot in silhouette as the chicks sit on a telephone wire with the backlit light spilling through one of the parent bird's outstretched wings. Kathy had been watching the chicks progress at the nest and waited until they had fledged before taking her striking photo. A wonderful reminder of an adult swallows hard working devotion to its offspring.

SCOTLAND'S NATURE FESTIVAL 2013  
18 - 26 May

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[www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk/naturefestival](http://www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk/naturefestival)

Scottish Natural Heritage  
Dùthaich Nàdair na h-Alba  
Year of Natural Scotland 2013



# Photography Competition Winners

2nd prize winner— Karen van der Zijden—Bottlenose dolphin



Karen Van Der Zijden spends a lot of time photographing bottlenose dolphins in the Moray Firth and her time and effort really paid off with this dramatic image. These are fast moving subjects so to get one in the frame is a challenge never mind sharp and composed well too. Karen has done all of these things and more as the lighting and spray of water add to the

atmosphere of the shot. Karen keeps going back as the thrill of seeing such a spectacle is hard to beat and a shot like this is just the icing on the cake.

3rd prize winner, Elaine Simpson—Inspiration

Elaine Simpson's photograph "Inspiration" was taken at the ancient Caledonian pine forest in Glen Affric, The Scots pines are backlit and in silhouette as the sun tries to burn through the mist shrouded forest. A very evocative image portraying the woodland at it's very best. It's one of these photographs that make us wish we had been there to experience the moment for ourselves. Fortunately for us Elaine was and can share the moment with us.



# Diary Dates



**9th November 2013 - Molluscs in Scotland.** A joint meeting of the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland & National Museums Scotland, at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh at 10.00. Please contact Adrian T. Sumner if you plan to attend:  
[adriantsumner@btinternet.com](mailto:adriantsumner@btinternet.com) , or telephone, 01620 894640.  
More details at: [www.conchsoc.org/pages/workshops.php](http://www.conchsoc.org/pages/workshops.php)

**15th November 2013—13th National Biodiversity Network Conference:** Future Challenges for the NBN. The Royal Society. London. Details:  
<http://www.nbn.org.uk/Events/Events-and-Training/Seminars-and-conferences/NBN-Conference-2013.aspx>

**25th November 2013—ALGE Conference & AGM 2013—**“European Directives – What have they ever done for us?” Venue—Birmingham.  
<http://www.cieem.net/events/586/alqe-conference-2013>

**26th November 2013—The Royal Society of Edinburgh: Lost at Sea—The Atlantic Salmon’s Ocean Odyssey.** The discussion forum will be chaired by Professor Michael Usher, Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Stirling and the event is supported by Scottish Natural Heritage, The Fishmongers’ Company, NASCO, and Cromarty Firth Fisheries Trust.  
<http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/events/event.php?id=334>

**4th December 2013—Low Carbon Scotland: meeting the emissions reduction targets.** Venue: Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh. Confirmed speaker— Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change .  
[http://p3-media.co.uk/wp-content/themes/p3media/downloads/Low-Carbon-Scotland-Event\\_v1-1.pdf](http://p3-media.co.uk/wp-content/themes/p3media/downloads/Low-Carbon-Scotland-Event_v1-1.pdf)

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