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# networkbulletin

WINTER 2023-24

FOR TCV SCOTLAND'S COMMUNITY NETWORK



Woodlands issue

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*Front cover: Seed collection workshop, looking for rainforest lichens and 'heeled in' saplings ready for planting.*

**W**ELCOME to the Winter Network Bulletin highlighting the work of The Conservation Volunteers in Scotland and of community groups and organisations belonging to TCV's Community Network. This issue has a tree planting and woodland theme, including the activities of Stewarton Woodlands Action Trust in East Ayrshire and TreeLink Stirling. Both are members of the Community Network, with the Stewarton group also belonging to the Community Woodlands Association, whose Director Andy Rockall explains its role in encouraging and supporting this expanding movement in Scotland.

Keeping on the woodland theme, the recently launched Forth Climate Forest aims to tackle the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss by planting millions of trees, from Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, and across the Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Council areas.

Woodlands are fantastic resources for getting people involved and we feature recent workshops on seed collecting, coppicing and rainforest lichens. And our Dead Good Deadwood Survey has been updated to encourage people to discover and survey the deadwood in their local woods. Community Network members can apply for free copies of the print version.

For anyone wanting to make a difference on the ground, winter is tree planting season and there are several schemes available for community groups and schools to receive free trees, including TCV's own I Dig Trees campaign. And for those who prefer to stay snug indoors we have a selection of nature books recommended by TCV staff.

Also in this issue: For budding botanists, the Identiplant course newly launched in Scotland may be what you need to take your skills to the next level – **the application deadline is 31 December.**





*Teenager Jamie clearing the paths as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Award.*

## Active in Stewarton



*The chainsaw gang in action.*

**Stewarton Woodlands Action Trust** is a small charitable community organisation which looks after a section of woodland, Lainshaw Woods, on the outskirts of Stewarton in East Ayrshire, five or so miles north of Kilmarnock. Here, the Trust's Secretary **Susan Williamson** explains their aims and activities:

We don't own the woods, but manage them on behalf of a local farmer, who is

happy to allow the people of Stewarton to use the woods for recreation. 2024 is our 20th anniversary and in that time we have achieved a lot to enhance the various experiences available within the woods.

We have applied for and gained funding for upgrading paths, so they are suitable for all to use, eg walkers, runners, pushchairs, wheelchairs, and cyclists. Our paths were particularly busy during





*Tree planting at Lainshaw Primary School.*

lockdown, when all of a sudden, entire families were out walking and enjoying the benefits of the great outdoors. We have installed many nature information panels to make the walks more educational, not to mention brightening the place up. We have members trained in the use of chainsaws, strimmers and brushcutters which are used on a regular basis to keep the paths clear for people to use. And we made a viewpoint close to our car park so that people with mobility issues could be brought there to sit and look out over the tranquil fields.

We have made and installed many bird boxes within the woods, and also produce them for selling at our local Yuletide Night, along with other products eg bramble jelly made from berries collected within the woods. We produce our own calendar each year, which is one of our main fund raisers, and this year at Yuletide Night we surpassed our best total by taking in over £700!

We have taken on the responsibility to try and keep the invasive species of Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed at bay within the town and especially along the banks of the River Annick, which runs alongside the woods that we manage. This

is a huge, onerous task, and at times an uphill struggle, but we do our best. We also try to keep on top of the litter problem with regular litter picks, including waste items from the river when the water level is low enough to get in without us having any accidents. And to help reduce another waste problem, we've had dog poo bins installed within the woods and at various sites throughout the town – the glamour of community action!

One of our main activities over the years has been to plant hundreds, possibly thousands of bare root trees in any spot that was looking a bit empty, and a lot of these have been provided free of charge through TCV's I Dig Trees scheme, for which we have been extremely grateful. Not only have we, the group members planted lots of trees, but we have involved school children ranging in age from six to 15, and this has always been a fun activity, especially for the younger ones. Two years ago, when we were struggling to find new places to plant trees, we decided to pot up the bare root trees, and started a little tree nursery behind our compound, and that gave us time to have a good think about where they would be best suited. As a result, we branched out from our woodland setting, and did planting along the banking





*Volunteer Andy putting up bird box.*



*Volunteer Robert installing a nature panel.*

of our local sports centre, all done with the permission of East Ayrshire Council.

We are now in our second year of a tree planting initiative called “Let Stewarton Breathe” which has involved us planting a selection of bare root trees but also some more mature trees that we have purchased from our funds. We have identified areas within the town that could do with having

more trees, and the hope is that this initiative will continue for another three years at least.

We have our own [Facebook](#) page and [website](#) which has plenty of information about what we do on a regular basis, and how to get in touch with us. New faces are always welcome!



## Cormonachan Woodlands

# Looking for lichens in Scotland's rainforest



▲ One of Cormonachan's many lichens – a type of *Cladonia*.

▼ Dr Oliver Moore (red jacket) sharing his enthusiasm and extensive knowledge with the TCV 'newbies'.



*Getting a closer look: Stirling-based Volunteer Officers Paul Archibald and Libby Johnson.*

In early Autumn, a group of TCV staff and volunteers ventured into the Argyll countryside for a lichen and bryophyte workshop at **Cormonachan Community Woodlands**, by Lochgoilhead. Led by Plantlife's **Dr Oliver Moore**, Saving Scotland's Rainforest Bryophytes and Lichens Advisor, the group explored the woods to find and identify many different species of lichens and bryophytes – a

group of plants containing mosses, liverworts and hornworts.

Cormonachan Community Woodlands comprises almost 64 hectares of oak trees approximately 300 years old, with areas of old coppiced hazel groves over 100 years old. Cormonachan forms part of Scotland's rainforest – the semi-natural woodlands of the west coast. The clue is in the name



*Cormonachan is home to a thriving population of Red squirrels. This cute character was captured at one of the woodland's squirrel feeders.*

HARLEY MATHIESON

rainforest, for this is a decidedly damp environment of high rainfall, relatively mild temperatures and clean air which combine to create an internationally important habitat of temperate rainforest with many diverse and rare species.

The woodlands lie within the Argyll Forest Park and the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, and are only an hour or so drive from Glasgow. They are managed for 'Conservation, Education and Recreation' by the charity Cormonachan Community Woodlands Ltd under a lease from Forestry and Land Scotland, with nearby Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre as the education provider. The group are members of the Community Woodlands Association ([page26](#)) and hold Volunteer Days twice a month throughout the year, with new volunteers very welcome! The volunteers clear invasive *Rhododendron ponticum*, maintain the paths and ditches, plant native trees, top up the squirrel feeders, erect and maintain the information signs and anything else needed to maintain the woodlands in good order. Volunteer registration plus upcoming dates and booking are available on the group's website (below).

The woodlands are well worth a visit with

4.5km of walks, which can take in the Red squirrel Hide, a medieval settlement and the beautiful Cormonachan Falls. In addition to the Red squirrels, Pine martens and 30 species of birds have been recorded here.

One of the TCV visitors was Harley Mathieson, who says: *"This was a fantastic opportunity to find out about the history and ecology of the woodlands, and why they are so important for lichens and bryophytes. There are over 400 species of lichens and 200 species of bryophytes at Cormonachan, some of which are very rare and threatened.*

*"After a brief introduction, and equipped with field guides and hand lenses, the group set off along the Squirrel Trail, but we were soon on our hands and knees exploring the understory of the ancient oak and hazel forest. We learnt how to identify different lichens on the trees and rocks, many having evocative names including Pixie Cup, Tree Flute, Script, and Speckled Sea Storm. We also learnt which species were missing, which told a story in itself.*

*"After a short lunch at the Red squirrel hide (where we were not disappointed!), the amazing Dr Moore took us again into*





*the woodlands to look at some of the bryophytes. We learnt that they play a vital role in regulating the water cycle and providing habitats for other organisms, and we learnt how to recognise some of the common and rare species, such as various Fern Mosses or Handsome Woollywort!*

*“Heading back to the carpark we realised that although we had spent many hours in the woods, we had travelled only a few hundred yards, such was the fascinating variety of subject matter in a relatively small area. Everyone had a wonderful and truly educational day and will be itching to pass on the knowledge gained!”*

Many thanks to Oliver Moore for sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm during the workshop, and thanks also to Dee Locke, Secretary of Cormanachan Community Woodlands, who was on hand to welcome the TCV group with an introduction about the woods. Oliver is no stranger to TCV, having been an apprentice in 2009 on our Natural Talent programme, backed by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to provide people with specialist ecology skills and

knowledge to plug gaps in the expertise of those working in the environmental sector. During his apprenticeship, Oliver studied bryophytes, so his subsequent career in this field of study is definitely a positive result for the Natural Talent programme.

### Find out more:

[Cormanachan Community Woodlands](#)

[Saving Scotland's Rainforest Project – Plantlife](#)

[Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest](#)

[Lost Rainforests of Britain](#)

The Lost Rainforests of Britain, by Guy Shrubsole. Reviewed on [page 31](#).

On 24 November, the Scottish Government announced increased funding to support projects that help restore and expand Scotland's rainforest area. Details [here](#)



# Updated Dead Good Deadwood Survey



*Scottish Wildlife Trust volunteers using the Deadwood Survey packs at Corsehillmuir Wood Nature Reserve in Ayrshire, with Alex Paterson, TCV Senior Project Officer (right), who co-ordinates our Citizen Science activities.* LINDSAY TWILLEY

We have been updating our Dead Good Deadwood Survey which encourages individuals and groups to discover and survey the deadwood in their communities. The survey is a great example of Citizen Science – providing opportunities for everyone to contribute data to help increase scientific knowledge of the natural world and environmental issues.

Deadwood is a part of a tree that has died and is in a state of decomposition.





*Volunteers measuring deadwood.*

Deadwood plays a big part in nutrient recycling, acts as a carbon storage system and helps the stability of woodland soil. Deadwood is also an important micro habitat for birds, mammals, fungi, plants, amphibians, insects and even fish!

Unfortunately, deadwood is often undervalued, particularly if it's considered unsightly or unhealthy and so needs to be 'tidied up'. We have produced the Dead Good Deadwood Survey so people can better understand the important role deadwood has, and that a good volume of deadwood is actually a sign of a healthy woodland. The survey should take no more than an hour to complete. Any piece of woodland will do, as long as it is at least 100 square metres in area. Ancient woodland, forestry plantations, trees growing on urban wasteland, wood pasture and scrub are all fine.

### Download the survey

The Deadwood Survey can be completed using our Deadwood Survey Booklet and Field Guide which can be downloaded from our website, where you can also share your results with us. Deadwood Survey details and materials are available [here](#)

### Free copies for Community Network members

Members of the [Community Network](#) in Scotland can also apply for free printed copies of the Survey Booklet and laminated Field Guide. A maximum of 10 Survey Packs are available per group. Apply [here](#)



### Scotland Counts

The Dead Good Deadwood Survey has been produced as part of TCV's Scotland Counts project, supported by Scottish Forestry, NatureScot and the Scottish Government. Scotland Counts aims to ensure that every individual and community in Scotland has the opportunity to develop skills and confidence to understand their local environment through Citizen Science.





# Stirling seed session



TCV and TreeLink Stirling recently ran a wild berry collection and seed preparation workshop, as **Ed Wood**, Senior Field Officer, outlines:

We started the day with a foraging walk and knowledge sharing session on Gowan Hill beneath the Stirling Castle walls. Here, we found a selection of berries, mainly of native hawthorn, blackthorn and guelder rose. This was followed by a seed extraction demonstration at TCV's Balallan House, led by TreeLink members.

We removed as much of the berries' flesh as possible by mashing and washing. The berry piths and stocks rose to the surface which were then carefully tipped out leaving only the seeds. A little like gold panning!

We then mixed the seeds with equal parts of compost and sharp sand, before potting them up and adding a protective layer of sand on top. The sand aids both drainage and heat retention. The seeds will rely on a deep frost before germinating, and may

not germinate for two years depending on conditions.

At the end of the workshop the participants took away their seed pots, and when ready will plant the resulting young trees in suitable sites as part of TreeLink Stirling's ambitious 'Crown of Trees' project – see page? It was a really nice day of learning despite the dreich conditions, and it was great to team up with TreeLink Stirling who we hope to work with further in the future. [See page 18.](#)



PHOTOS: NICK MCKINLAY, AIMEE MORETTI



# TCV Hero Awards 2023



*During the Autumn, Pat Alexander and the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Team spent time scything meadows in local parks.*

PHOTO: SORT OF...FILMS



*Pat with his TCV Hero Award and some of his fellow Edinburgh volunteers.*

JOE WILLIAMS

TCV's Hero Awards are our annual celebration of TCV volunteers and community groups. We love to use this opportunity to showcase what volunteers can achieve for their own health and wellbeing or learning and skills, and for their wider community and the environment.

The overall Green Hero Award winner this year is 89 year-old **Pat Alexander**, who has been a stalwart of our Edinburgh volunteer group for an amazing 27 years. Pat shares TCV's values of welcoming people, exploring local greenspaces and mucking in to make things better. Pat and the other TCV Green Heroes share their stories in a series of short videos which can be viewed [here](#)





*The State of Nature Report acknowledged the important role volunteers played, and continue to play, in collecting the data which underpins the report's findings. And volunteers can play a vital role in reversing nature loss. Pictured here are TCV volunteers at ScotRail's Shields Depot in Glasgow where they have created a wildflower meadow and bug hotel to enhance the site's biodiversity. BO COUCH*

# The state we're in

## The State of Nature Report

**2023** outlines the state of nature throughout the UK. In Scotland, the report shows that since systematic monitoring of 407 Scottish species began in 1994, their numbers have declined on average by 15%. While some of these species have seen increases, in the last decade 43% have declined. Since 1994, Swift, Curlew, Lapwing and Kestrels have all declined by more than a half. Some of the species that have suffered the biggest declines are less widely known and recognised, including moths such as Rosy Minor, Satyr Pug and Grey Mountain Carpet. The State of Nature Report has been produced by a partnership of conservation and research organisations. Read about Scotland's State of Nature [here](#)

The Capercaillie is a large woodland grouse and is one of the species whose numbers have declined dramatically in recent years and is considered at risk of extinction unless management measures



are successful. This decline is due to a variety of factors believed to include habitat loss and fragmentation, predation and disturbance, and collisions with deer fencing. Capercaillie breed mainly in native pinewoods in the Highlands, particularly in the area covered by the Cairngorms National Park. The male (pictured) is about the size of a turkey and in Gaelic the Capercaillie is called capall-coille, 'the horse of the forest'. A number of organisations are working to halt the Capercaillie's decline, including the [Cairngorms Capercaillie Project](#)



## Nature Notes

# Irrupting in the trees



the most distinctive of the winter visitors is the colourful waxwing, considered one of the most beautiful birds to be seen in Britain. In some years, waxwings can arrive in greater numbers than normal when food is particularly scarce in their home territories, an event known as an irruption.

The waxwing is hard to miss with its silky, grey-pink plumage and prominent crest. They are particularly fond of native berries like holly, hawthorn and rowan, and from ornamental plants like cotoneaster in our parks and gardens. Large flocks of waxwings can quickly strip a tree of all its berries before they move on to the next feeding spot. They can eat two to three times their body weight each day – that's lot of berries! This winter is shaping up as a good waxwing irruption.



*Waxwings in Edinburgh's Sighthill Park, captured by TCV's Mhairi Campbell.*

As some lucky people take a break in the sun for a welcome escape from the bleak midwinter, many birds are coming **here** for a winter break. These migrants arrive from Iceland, Scandinavia and continental Europe where the temperatures and conditions are typically far harsher. One of

You can help seasonal visitors like waxwings and our resident wildlife (not just birds) to survive the winter by planting berry-bearing shrubs and trees.



## And the winner is....



*A winter view of Bennachie in the Grampian landscape.*

Congratulations to the **Bailies of Bennachie** who won the Community Initiative Award in the prestigious Nature of Scotland Awards 2023, whose winners were announced on 22 November. The Awards are organised each year by RSPB Scotland and co-sponsored by NatureScot to celebrate the best of nature conservation in Scotland – the inspiring individuals, projects and organisations caring for our wonderful wildlife and environment. Details of all the Award winners are available [here](#)

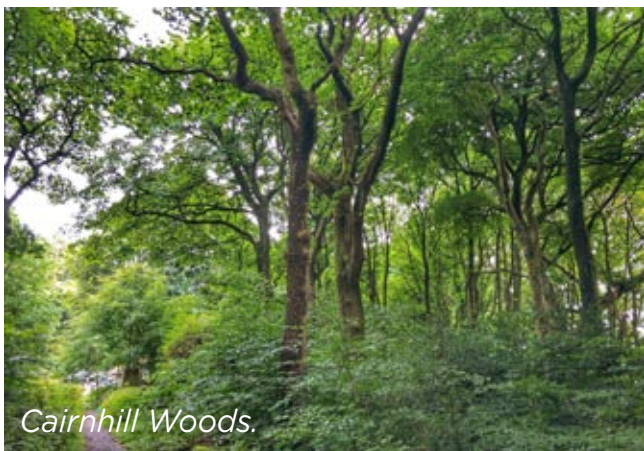
For fifty years the Bailies of Bennachie have been caring for the natural environment, history and culture of Bennachie (pronounced Ben-a-hee), the prominent hill and much-loved landmark in the North-east, approximately 20 miles from Aberdeen. The Bailies now number 5,000 members and pursue their objectives by many means including meetings and events, work parties, exhibitions, lectures, conferences and publications. Find out more about the [Bailies of Bennachie](#)



## Also shortlisted...

..... for the Community Initiative Award was **Cairnhill Woods Group** who help care for Cairnhill Woods in Westerton Village, a few miles to the north west of Glasgow. The group have been working with the wood's owners East Dunbartonshire Council since 2008 to improve the woods for local residents, both people and wildlife. The group carries out regular clean ups and other activities and events aimed at people of all ages and abilities.

Both the Bailies of Bennachie and Cairnhill Woods Group are longstanding members of our **Community Network**, which now has over 300 members in Scotland. With support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, membership is free.



JIM MCCUMESTY



JIM MCCUMESTY

Another initiative shortlisted for the Nature of Scotland Awards was TCV's Deekin to Jan (looking to learn) project, run with our partners Article 12, and which was shortlisted for the Innovation Award. Through a wide range of nature-based activities the project aimed to improve the life chances of young people from the Gypsy/Traveller community in the Falkirk area. The project missed out on the Innovation Award (well done Saving the Pine Hoverfly from extinction), but we believe the Deekin to Jan team and its young people are still winners!







Details of I Dig Trees are available on our [website](#) as is our new Tree Library with information on popular native tree species to plant, along with advice on how to plant a tree and the all-important maintenance and aftercare.

TCV's annual I Dig Trees campaign for 2023/24 is in full swing to encourage community tree planting across the UK by providing free tree packs, each with up to 50 young native trees ready for planting. The campaign provides packs for different locations and the wildlife they are trying to attract:

- Pocket Forest Pack
- Greener Cities Pack
- Pollinators Pack
- Park Pack
- Hawthorn Hedge Pack
- Wildlife Booster Pack
- Traditional Woodland Pack

There is also a Fruit Tree Pack for Primary Schools comprising 2 apple varieties and 2 pear varieties to create your very own mini orchard.

One of the groups who have received their free trees this year is the [Water of Leith Conservation Trust](#), whose volunteers are pictured here planting a hedgerow of mainly hawthorn and blackthorn in the Juniper Green area of Edinburgh.







Tree cover in and around Stirling is expanding with the help of community-based charity TreeLink Stirling, as group member **Paul Dumbleton** explains:

TreeLink Stirling was founded during the winter lockdown of 2020/21 by a group of people brought together online by their appreciation of the ecological, social and cultural importance of trees. Despite

the constraints of the pandemic, we got down to work planning and registering our new charity TreeLink Stirling. The group's trustees set themselves the tasks of growing new trees, supporting community tree planting, looking after existing woodlands and encouraging street tree planting. We also wanted to be a voice for trees and woodlands in the Stirling Council area.

PHOTOS: PAUL DUMBLETON





## Woodland management

Since its earliest days TreeLink has been involved in woodland management and tree planting projects in collaboration with Stirling Council. This was possible thanks to an early **Chestnut Fund** grant from TCV which enabled us to buy the necessary tools. TreeLink's most recent woodland work has been in the woodland surrounding the National Wallace Monument at the Abbey Craig. This is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is in need of better maintenance. TreeLink has removed invasive sycamore which colonised a large area left bare following significant storms, and this is now ready for re-planting.

## Tree nursery

TreeLink uses a 'dispersed community nursery' model for its tree growing. With support from TreeLink, volunteers grow trees from seed in their own gardens. We have developed a tree nursery in Braehead Community Garden where seedlings can be grown on if volunteers lack space in their own patch. Monthly maintenance sessions keep the nursery plots weed free and watered. Trees grown in the nursery have already been used in various community planting schemes. In future the

focus for growing will be the inspirational 'Crown of Trees' project which we have recently unveiled.

## The Crown of Trees

TreeLink aims to realise a 'Crown of Trees' around the city of Stirling to create a 36km walking route which connects important woodlands such as Abbey Craig, Balquhiddelock Wood, Gillies Hill and Craigforth with important historical locations such as the sites of the battles of Bannockburn (1314) and Stirling Bridge (1297). Most of the route is served by existing footpaths and is wooded, but we are keen to work with landowners and local communities to fill the gaps and manage the woods, some of which are in need of better care. TreeLink is already in discussion with some land managers where tree planting or woodland management activities will be an important contribution to the Crown of Trees. The project idea has been well received, for example Alyn Smith, MP for Stirling commented: *"What a fantastic vision for Stirling! This is not just a vision for Stirling, but a series of scalable, deliverable community projects which will make a real difference."* Councillor Jen Preston, Convener of the Stirling Council Environment, Transport and Net





Zero Committee added: *“I was delighted to meet the passionate and committed volunteers who make up TreeLink Stirling. Trees make communities better places to live as well as being a crucial part of Stirling’s response to the climate emergency, and I look forward to learning more about these exciting plans.”*

### Free Trees for Babies

TreeLink is about to make its second donation of more than one hundred trees to parents in the Stirling Council area to mark the birth, adoption or loss of a child. The Free Trees for Babies project was inspired by a similar project run by Cambridge City Council. TreeLink has been fortunate to receive generous sponsorship from Vivisol Home Care Services, which has its Scottish base in Stirling. Vivisol provides and delivers oxygen to people’s homes for NHS Scotland and could see the obvious connection between its oxygen business and trees. TreeLink has been delighted to develop a working relationship with this local business and would like to work with others. The project aims to get more trees planted, especially in urban areas. Experience in the Cambridge project showed that trees associated with children are usually well

cared for and protected. Sponsorship has allowed TreeLink to buy good sized trees and to offer a menu of garden friendly trees ranging from apple varieties to rowan and field maple.

### Speaking up for trees

TreeLink has taken every opportunity to respond to Stirling Council consultations on relevant policy development. We are now moving into a phase of trying to work with the Council to ensure that its policies are implemented, and ambitious tree planting and canopy development targets are met.

TreeLink is demonstrating that a community-based organisation can contribute to making positive changes, both to the environment and to the lives of people who volunteer. And we are delighted to be developing a partnership with TCV, which recently saw our joint seed collection and preparation session – hopefully the first of many such activities (pictured left and page 11).

There are various ways to give a little time to support TreeLink Stirling’s activities, with details on the group’s [website](#)





# Coppicing – a case of cutting back

By **Harley Mathieson**, TCV Senior Project Officer.



PHOTOS: HARLEY MATHIESON

On a sunny day in November a group of interested individuals attended the TCV Practical Coppicing Workshop at **Stoneheap Wood**, led by owners **Micah** and **Amy Palmer**. Stoneheap is a young mixed plantation woodland near Stoneyburn in West Lothian. Coppicing is a traditional method of managing woodlands by cutting back a tree to ground level periodically to stimulate new shoots to grow.

The workshop attendees came from

a variety of backgrounds including conservation and forestry. We looked at the tools and techniques of coppicing and pollarding, but we concentrated on coppicing a riparian (habitat adjacent to a river) willow stand in the morning and worked on a mixed hazel and aspen stand in the afternoon, where we aimed to create a 'coppice with standards.' Under this system, some trees are grown as standards over a longer rotation, with the coppice beneath cropped at more frequent intervals.

We also looked at a fantastic basket willow plantation of varieties particularly used in basket making and weaving. And we explored all the practical uses for the cut material, everything from protective dead hedges to riverbank conservation with living willow, to Christmas wreath making!

Further information about **coppicing** is available in 'Woodlands', one of TCV's series of **Conservation Handbooks**.



## Forth Climate Forest

Communities - Canopy - Connectivity - Carbon

**To mark the launch of the Forth Climate Forest (FCF), the first trees have been planted in the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, and in Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk. The trees were planted by the Park Authority and Council Leaders during National Tree Week 2023, the UK's largest annual tree celebration.**

The Forth Climate Forest is an ambitious initiative, led by the University of Stirling, that aims to tackle the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Over the next 10 years the project will facilitate the planting of 16 million new trees to increase the tree and woodland cover across the urban and rural settings of the Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Council areas.

Working with TCV in Clackmannanshire

This winter will see the first significant

# Introducing Forth Climate Forest

a groundbreaking plan to plant millions of trees

By **Guy Harewood**, Development Officer, Forth Climate Forest.



*To help launch the exciting new initiative, Wimpy Park in Alloa was the location of a ceremonial tree planting with representatives from Forth Climate Forest, Clackmannanshire Council, TCV, Woodland Trust Scotland and Wimpy Park Community Group.*



amount of tree planting delivered through the Forth Climate Forest. Working in partnership with TCV and Clackmannanshire Council we will be planting 10,000 native broadleaved trees within Clackmannanshire.

### Want to be involved?

The great thing about tree planting is that everyone can get involved, meaning that everyone can do something positive to fight climate change and help stop the decline of our wildlife. The Forth Climate Forest is actively seeking to work with local people, community groups, schools, land managers, businesses, environmental charities and public agencies.

There will be a range of opportunities to contribute to the success of this

project, whether through sponsorship, participating in planting activities, raising awareness or integrating the key themes into your own policies and projects.

### Want to know more?

The Forth Climate Forest is a tree planting initiative that covers the Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling Councils, as well as a large part of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park and has been developed around four themes: Communities, Canopy, Connectivity and Carbon.

To increase the tree canopy in and around communities, trees will be planted in school grounds, on vacant and derelict land and across parks. We want to plant these trees where they are needed most, so that neighbourhoods

can cope with our changing climate and the associated extreme weather events. In rural settings the project will focus on planting trees between existing woodlands to create better connected woodland habitats to help to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

Trees are the simplest, most cost-effective way of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. By planting, at scale, the Forth Climate Forest will help mitigate against climate change.

Forth Climate Forest is a partnership initiative, hosted by University of Stirling through Scotland's International Environment Centre. Funding has been secured, for the first two years, from the Woodland Trust Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Clackmannanshire Council, Falkirk Council and Stirling Council.

To find out more or to get involved, contact [Guy Harewood](#) or visit the University of Stirling [website](#)

In the west of Scotland, the Clyde Climate Forest (CCF) will see 18 million trees planted in both urban and rural parts of Glasgow City Region which encompasses eight local authority areas. Find out more on the CCF [website](#)





# Interested in studying Identiplant to further your botanist skills?

TCV has developed a new hub to deliver and expand the online course in Scotland with the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI).

## What is Identiplant?

The course is very popular across England but is relatively unknown in Scotland. The TCV Identiplant hub will provide a new pathway in Scotland to develop beginner plant enthusiasts towards becoming skilled botanists who are able to make valuable contributions to the field.

## Is Identiplant for me?

Identiplant is for people who want to get started with serious botany. It's created to take near beginners to an intermediate level. So, Identiplant is intended for people who already have some knowledge of plants and are ready to advance. You might currently identify plants by matching pictures and remembering names but want a more systematic approach. Through Identiplant, you'll use scientific names, written descriptions, and keys – tools used to identify plants based on their characteristics.

## How is Identiplant taught?

Identiplant is a unique online course, taking a structured plant family approach. The detailed content builds the knowledge of students allowing them to eventually be able to make accurate plant identifications. Students are supported in completing the course by a personal tutor. There are 15 units, each covering a particular topic and from unit four onwards, most of the individual units cover specific plant families that are common in the UK.

## What tasks will I complete for Identiplant?

Students are tasked with hunting specific widespread plants from a 'wanted list' in their local area throughout the season. They will complete question sheets associated with each unit in order to demonstrate their understanding of the material. These are sent back to their personal course tutor for feedback.



## How much time do I need to complete Identiplant?

About three hours per week should be sufficient to study the units and write up the answers, and additional time is required to go out and find the plants.

## What equipment do I need for Identiplant?

The only equipment required is The Wild Flower Key by Francis Rose and a x10 hand lens.

## What recognition do I get by completing Identiplant?

Students who complete the Question sheets are awarded a Certificate of Completion. The course is not accredited but is accepted as Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The most important outcomes will be recognition by other botanists and the knowledge and confidence to progress, either independently or with a group, to higher levels of competence in plant identification.

## What does Identiplant cost?

The course fees are £300. Students accepted onto Identiplant may find that they are eligible for grants and support from a number of organisations towards the cost of undertaking the course, including the BSBI's Training Grant. For those undertaking Identiplant as part of CPD, their employer may be willing to cover all or some of the course fees.

## How do I apply for Identiplant?

Further details, including sample course units, are available on the Identiplant [website](#) where applications are also made. Applications for Identiplant 2024 close on **31 December**, and the course itself runs from February to September 2024.







# The Community Woodlands Association

Connecting woodlands and people



Community woodlands owned or managed by local people are increasingly important assets for conservation, education and recreation. This growing movement is championed by the Community Woodlands Association, as outlined by its Director, **Andy Rockall**:

The Community Woodlands Association (CWA) was founded in 2003, growing out of a recognition that the vibrant community woodland movement in Scotland would benefit from a national organisation providing advocacy, representation, networking, training, an annual conference

and technical support. CWA was established to deliver those functions and has been very successful over many years delivering for and supporting members to achieve their own goals.

Along the way CWA has delivered many





projects, most recently a Native Woods Project articulating social and economic benefits of communities managing native woodlands. Working with four community woodland groups this produced a series of films, case studies and a report in more academic style. All of which are available on the CWA [website](#)

Our purpose is to support our members and we've done that and done it well: always operating with a small staff team who work from home, the organisation never having an office and working without that overhead cost has undoubtedly helped us operate efficiently.

Our membership has risen steadily over the years to a current total of 161 member groups, plus individual members joining to support a good cause. Each member group wherever they are across the country is an independent organisation with its own governance, objectives and ways of working, delivering for their own community, according to the wishes of their community. CWA represents and advocates on their behalf but does not govern, manage or direct the actions of the groups. Whilst some groups have staff, most are entirely voluntary in both governance and work on the ground.

CWA currently has four staff posts, all part time and working hard to make it easier for communities to deliver for themselves in ways that they choose. We have a number of events advertised on our website, with more in the pipeline and are working toward having a programme of events up to six months in advance. We are also organising exchanges between community woodland groups with those in the diary being hosted by Dunnet Forest Trust (Caithness) Knoydart Forest Trust (Highland) and Carsphairn Community Woodland (Dumfries & Galloway). A recent exchange at Abriachan, near Inverness, was attended by 20 representatives of community woodlands creating a fantastic forum to discuss common issues and solutions.

We are also on the point of establishing a mentoring scheme. We've recruited a number of professionally qualified foresters willing to donate time to offer technical forestry advice and support to member groups and we're in the process of match making – linking up the right people with the right group. Initially this work will focus on forestry related topics. However, a lot of our members are dealing with other specialist topics such as tree nursery establishment and management, managing





CWA members sharing experiences (and food) during an exchange visit at [Abriachan Forest Trust](#) near Loch Ness. PHOTOS: SHARON SMITH/CWA

other habitats, footpath and other infrastructure design and build, and lots more. Not to mention all the topics around people and organisation management: Health & Safety, working with volunteers and more. If possible, we'd like to expand the mentoring available to other topics. There is lots of opportunity for us to make support available and we're looking to do that.

Our vision is a growing movement of communities engaged in managing land and woodland with easy access to the support they want when they want it. A movement that is represented and recognised nationally, widely celebrated and renowned for delivering for communities across the country in ways that each community determines for themselves.

CWA details are available on our [website](#)

***“Many of CWA’s and TCV’s aims align and we look forward to continuing and developing our partnership in supporting the amazing community woodland groups across Scotland.”***

Josh Thornhill, TCV Operations Leader



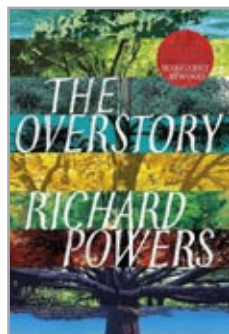
# A good read

**In the run-up to Christmas, thoughts turn to gifts for family or friends. Books remain a popular choice with something suitable for all ages and interests. Here, staff from TCV Scotland give their own recommendations for books about nature and the environment. As well as a gift for others, you could of course treat yourself!**

## The Overstory

*By Richard Powers*

I found this a tremendously moving and thought-provoking book that explores the intricate connections between humans and nature. Through several interconnected stories, Powers weaves a narrative that spans generations and continents, delving into the lives of characters whose lives are deeply intertwined with the forests and trees of the world. The characters each have their own unique perspectives and motivations, and the book is a



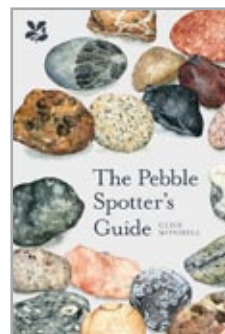
powerful celebration of environmental activism without flinching from its moral challenges. Powers' prose is lyrical and evocative, and handsomely reflects the beauty and complexity of our forests. In all, *The Overstory* is a profound novel that challenges you to reconsider your relationship with nature and the impact of human actions upon it. I have rarely both shouted for joy and cried inconsolably whilst reading a book.

HARLEY MATHIESON, GLASGOW

## The Pebble Spotter's Guide

*By Clive Mitchell*

Who knew pebbles could have so much about them! This little volume contains descriptions and beautiful illustrations of a range of different rocks and stones that you might find out walking. Can't tell your concrete from your conglomerate? Your dolerite from your porphyry? This book tells you how to tell them apart, how they formed, and what they mean about the place where you found them. A perfect stocking filler and companion for a walk along the shore. PAUL BARCLAY, LIVINGSTON



## The Lost Words

*By Robert Macfarlane, and illustrated by Jackie Morris*

This is a breathtaking and enchanting book that celebrates the beauty and magic of the natural world. I use it with several groups of young people I work with, but it is a truly magical book that transcends all ages and inspires love for the natural world for everyone. Through a collection of poems (or spells!) and stunning illustrations, Macfarlane and Morris bring to life the names of plants and animals that are disappearing from our children's vocabulary. Every turn of the page captures the essence of a creature or plant in a way that is both educational and deeply moving. Morris' illustrations are intricate and full of detail, drawing you into a world of vibrant colours and textures that will literally spellbind children and adults alike! *The Lost Words* has several other projects associated with it, including two albums where the spells are put to folk music, a collection of exquisite postcards and online learning resources.

HARLEY MATHIESON, GLASGOW

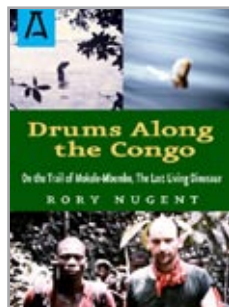




## Drums Along the Congo

By Rory Nugent

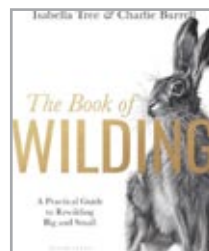
An American explorer, armed with a week of survival training in New York's Central Park, heads into one of the Earth's great wildernesses following rumours of the existence of a living dinosaur, known to local people as Mokele Mbembe – the God Beast. We follow the author on his journey along the Congo, travelling by rickety canoe, and even ricketier airplane, navigating rapids and incredible government bureaucracy as he goes. The descriptions of the rainforests, the challenges of survival in this harsh environment, and the people who call it home are the real stars of the book. It won't come as a shock that the author doesn't quite find a dinosaur (you'd definitely have seen it on the news if he did) but it's not about the finding, it's about the journey – perhaps the real Mokele Mbembe is the friends we make on the way.... Except it's not. It's definitely a dinosaur. PAUL BARCLAY, LIVINGSTON



## The Book of Wilding – A Practical Guide to Rewilding, Big and Small

By Isabella Tree and Charlie Burrell

This is a captivating and thought-provoking guide to rewilding and its potential to restore ecosystems and biodiversity. Following on from Tree's much acclaimed book *Wilding*, this mighty tome draws from their own experiences at the Knepp Estate in England but also looks at other projects around the globe. Tree and Burrell not only share their journey of transforming a conventional farm into a thriving wilderness, but through vivid storytelling and scientific insights, they demonstrate the power of allowing nature to take the lead in land management. The book explores the complex web of relationships between species and the profound impact that rewilding can have on the health of ecosystems. Tree and Burrell's passion for nature shines through their writing as the guide challenges you to reassess your relationship with the natural world and discover possibilities for re-establishing balance and harmony. The Book of Wilding is a compelling read as well as an indispensable guide to potential rewilders – from back gardens to entire landscapes! HARLEY MATHIESON, GLASGOW



## Fire Weather – A True Story From A Hotter World

By John Vaillant

This book recounts the events of May 2016 when an unprecedented wildfire threatened to overwhelm the city of Fort McMurray in Alberta, Canada. The entire population of 90,000 was forced to evacuate in just hours, a chaotic scene of choked highways as people desperately tried to escape the ever-closer flames. This was one example of the increasingly frequent wildfires and other severe weather events world-wide attributed to increased levels of carbon dioxide and global warming, caused principally by the burning of fossil fuels in our homes, transport and industry. The irony of the Fort McMurray Fire is that the city is the centre of Canada's bitumen industry, bitumen being a tar like substance from which synthetic crude oil and diesel fuel are extracted – fossil fuels! Vaillant also charts the intertwined history of climate science – it's older than you think, and how it has been consistently ignored, denied and attacked by vested interests. But as Bob Dylan sang – *the times they are a changing*.

GRAHAM BURNS, GLASGOW

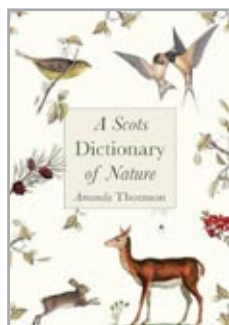




## A Scots Dictionary of Nature

*By Amanda Thomson*

Not really a book for reading as such, but brilliant to dip in and out of, looking up the ‘old’ words that our ancestors used to describe the natural world around them. Scots is the ‘other’ language of Scotland (or the other, other if we include Brittonic Welsh!) and this book does a wonderful job of preserving the some of that cultural heritage. For me it transports me back to the fireside at my Grandad’s and the rich, beautiful and historic, language he spoke so fluently, but which most folk, even then, dismissed as just ‘slang’. PAUL BARCLAY, LIVINGSTON



## The Lost Rainforests of Britain

*By Guy Shrubsole*

In this book, writer and campaigner Guy Shrubsole celebrates the temperate rainforests of Britain’s Atlantic fringes and provides a call to arms for more people to recognise, value and restore these unique habitats



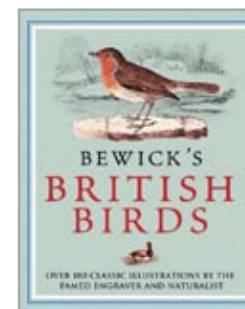
which are rarer than tropical rainforests, but are unknown to most people in this country, even many environmentalists. The mainstay of our rainforests is the oak with a supporting cast including birch, rowan, holly, hazel and ash. These host a lush abundance of ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens, plus a diverse range of birds, mammals and insects. The wet, west coast of Scotland is a particular stronghold with approximately 74,000 acres of rainforest, although this is only 20% of the area with the climate conditions suitable for this habitat. Over millennia, trees have been cut down for fuel, timber and farmland. Shrubsole believes the remaining rainforest could successfully regenerate and expand if effective measures are taken to control the negative impacts of nibbling sheep and deer, and encroaching *Rhododendron ponticum*, which combine to prevent young trees from establishing themselves. And, to survive and thrive, our rainforests need the active involvement of the people and communities who live in and around them, a good example being Cormanachan, featured on [page 6](#).

GRAHAM BURNS, GLASGOW

## Bewick’s British Birds

*By Thomas Bewick*

The original bird book, Thomas Bewick’s guide was originally published in 1797 and was a favourite of Charlotte Bronte and William Wordsworth. This reprinted edition from Arcturus Publishing covers both Bewick’s ‘land’ and ‘water’ bird editions and includes 180 birds, along with the woodcut engravings, which made the original publications so special. The prose descriptions of the birds themselves, often written only from descriptions Bewick had been sent from others, or from observations made about dead specimens sent to him in the post, have a timeless quality – they may not be strictly accurate by modern standards, but are beautiful nonetheless. PAUL BARCLAY, LIVINGSTON



# make space for nature



RUBY MCKINLEY/WILDERNESS WOOD

Help our feathered friends this winter by adding a bird feeder to any suitable garden space. More winter wildlife-friendly tips are available at [Make Space For Nature](#)

## Funding update

For community environmental groups and projects, sometimes a few hundred pounds can be the difference between something happening or not. Our latest [Funding Update](#) lists various funding sources, large and small, including our own [Chestnut Fund](#) that may make that difference.



## Free membership

With support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, TCV's Community Network offers free one year membership to community organisations, large and small, who help care for their local greenspaces. The Community Network has 2,000+ member groups spread throughout the UK, with over 300 in Scotland.

[Find out more and join the Network here](#)



The Network Bulletin is produced quarterly by The Conservation Volunteers in Scotland and features groups belonging to the Community Network, plus news of TCV's own projects and volunteers.



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TCV Scotland's community, health and environmental volunteering activities are supported by organisations and partners including:



Scottish Forestry  
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The Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



NatureScot  
Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba



Views and opinions expressed in the Network Bulletin do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or of The Conservation Volunteers.

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