

The Scottish Wildlife Trust

North of Scotland Group Newsletter

March 2024

Introduction

A belated Happy New Year to all of our Local Group members in the North of Scotland. It's been a wild and wintery start to the year, tough on wildlife and perhaps on birds in particular following the devastating impact of bird flu on particular species. Amidst the difficulties last year we remained fortunate to have our usual influx of winter visitors, with skeins of geese winging their way south. Large numbers of **greylags** and **pink-footed geese** still remain in our area. In late January, thousands of them delighted those of us who were fortunate to see them in a large stubble field at Fodderty, between Dingwall and Strathpeffer. Standing out from the crowd was a single **snow goose**, perhaps heralding the weather that was to follow early in February. The prospect of an end to winter approaches. We all look forward now to some warmer weather, to the green shoots of spring and to the return of our spring migrants and summer visitors.

Protecting Our Wild Habitats

The Trust is active both nationally and at Local Group levels in responding to planning applications which threaten some of our key rare and precious wildlife habitats such as Coul Links pictured opposite here. Such work is complemented by hosting national events and political lobbying on a broad spectrum of species and habitat specific issues. Members can also help by raising concerns with their MSPs.



Our Reserves

We have many stunning reserves in the North of Scotland including, on the west coast, the Trust's largest reserve **Ben Mor Coigach** (>5,000 hectares) - pictured opposite during one of our Local Group outings in July, 2023. It is a "Top Walk", as is another of our summer outing venues, on the east coast, **Spey Bay**, a great place to witness the spectacle of **ospreys** in action.



As well as conserving a huge variety of land-based flora and fauna, between them these two reserves have the added bonus of affording visitors the opportunity to view cetaceans such as **basking sharks** and **dolphins**.

Seems a good idea? Don't just put it on your list of might dos, please do take the opportunity to visit our local reserves. Opportunities to undertake volunteering work are available for example both at Ben Mor Coigach and at Spey Bay. It makes for a fun and sociable day out, contributes significantly to the work of the Trust and is very worthwhile. Regular invites to volunteer go out to members via email from our **North of Scotland Reserves Project Officer, Beth Harwood**.

Please note: If you do not routinely receive emails from SWT HQ on local group events and volunteering opportunities, this may be because you are not signed up with HQ to receive emails from them. In order to sign up for receiving communications from SWT HQ please follow this link: <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/sign-up-to-our-mailing-list/>

Our Local Group Programme of Events

In recent years, our programme of events has largely comprised of "talks and walks". The evening talks have all been via Zoom since the Covid pandemic, rather than by the more traditional face-to-face meetings. In our huge local group area this has the advantage of being accessible to most members throughout the Highlands and Islands, so we are sticking with this format meantime.

We have been fortunate with our choice of speakers and have had many excellent presentations for Local Group members, some of which were run very successfully last year to a wider audience as **national webinars**, for example, **"The Corncrake, an Ecology of an Enigma"** by Professor Frank Rennie and **"Uist and Climate Change"** by Professor Stewart Angus. In our first event of 2024, which took place on Wednesday 7th February, Lorna Hall (from Whale and Dolphin Conservation) got the year off to a very good start. Dr Corallie Hunt from NatureScot will be speaking on **"Scotland's Blue Carbon - Opportunities and Challenges as a Nature-based Solution to the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis"** at our next Zoom event at 7.30pm on Wednesday 6th March. The following month on Wednesday 3rd April at 7.30pm, we have James Merryweather on the subject of **"Identifying Britain's Ferns - First Steps and Dips into the Difficult"**. .

Annual General Meeting, [Wednesday 3rd April, following the talk on Ferns.](#)

Please note that we have a number of vacancies on the Local Group Committee. Local Group members are therefore encouraged to seriously consider standing for election. Nominations must be received by the Secretary before the AGM. If nominations exceed vacancies, elections shall be held at the AGM. Elections shall also be held for any vacant Office Bearer positions.

Secretary: Evelyn Cromarty. Contact on: swtnosgroup@gmail.com

Chair: John A Cromarty