

Words of the



**Scottish nature
quotes**

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01

A cry escaped from him, and everyone on the boat turned just in time to see it too. And they all cried out, their hearts leaping into their mouths as they saw... first, a giant head, rising from the sea... then a pair of huge pectoral fins, held out to the side like wings... followed by the vast and unmistakable outline of a humpback whale as it hurled its body right up out of the water - twisted once in the air in an arc of sunlit sea spray - then crashed down again to be swallowed by the sea, like it had never happened.

From: *The Whale Watchers* by Dougie Poynter

02

Farewell to the mountains, high-cover'd with snow,
Farewell to the straths and green vallies below;
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods,
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.

From: *My Heart's In The Highlands* by Robert Burns ([full poem here](#))

03

So there I lie on the plateau, under me the central core of fire from which was thrust this grumbling grinding mass of plutonic rock, over me blue air, and between the fire of the rock and the fire of the sun, scree, soil and water, moss, grass, flower and tree, insect, bird and beast, wind, rain and snow - the total mountain.

From: *The Living Mountain* by Nan Shepherd

04

Above the estuary, the pale moon shifts, and the tide, like a bale of cloth unfolded, is pulled towards the land, a swathe of rippled silk, spilling over sand, easing under the hulls of fishing boats and brushing the tips of bulrushes, edging inland as far as it can reach – until, gathered into narrowed, earthbound arms, seawater blurs into river, a rush of it flowing from Galloway hills, down into this saltmouth that it floods with freshwater, licking at the briny tongue until the dawn, when, drawn by the moon's odd magnet, the tide slips back towards the shore.

From: *Solway* by Elizabeth Burns ([full poem here](#))

05

I walk along the wind farm track towards the moorland ridge. Behind me, to the south-east, a pale half-moon is showing through the blue deeps of the early evening sky. Ahead of me the bright, unclouded sun hangs low over the peak of Uamh Bheag. Apart from the wind, the only sound is the soft crunch of my shoes on the loose stones of the track. The only movement is the quiver of grass and the relentless shadows of the turbine blades sweeping across the moor. Up here, things feel peaceful and weird.

Then something stirs in the heather. A red deer hind is watching me walk towards her. I pause. For a few seconds we stand, utterly still, gazing at one another. I forget all about the vastness of the turbines and the noise of the blades.

The hind turns and bounds silently across the moor until she is lost in a haze of evening sunlight. The noise returns. The question remains: can I still call this a wild place?

From: *Getting the Hang of the Wind* by Chris Powici (published in *Antlers of Water*, edited by Kathleen Jamie, 2020)

06

The north wind blasted me in a sudden fury as I reached the highest point, and I staggered back a step, bracing with my trekking poles. Clouds the colour of hammered tin ripped over the mountains to the north. The thread of a river led my eye in that direction, into the heart of Knoydart - this strange, sad and beautiful land that had once been a home to hundreds of people, centuries ago.

From: *The Farthest Shore* by Alex Roddie

07

Deep inside the forest, the earliest signs of blackberries are beginning to emerge: small clusters of yellowed fruit, gradually turning pink. It will be months before they are at their fat, purplish best, and soon after that the bushes will grow heavy with flies, while lower down in the undergrowth, badgers and pine martens pluck the fruit from its brambles with daggered teeth. The village children will come here, too, clutching in their chubby fingers borrowed plastic pots and the promise to bring home enough for a crumble; their mouths and fingers will be stained crimson and their wrists will boast the thorny wrath of the bushes' defensive pricks.

From: *Motherhood* by Alexandra Yates (aged 16), Junior winner in the Scottish Wildlife Trust's 2024 Words of the Wild writing competition.

08

The dewy grass glistens in the morning sun, droplets sliding down the blades. A pleasant mist hovers over the tall grass, and the air feels crisp against my cheeks. I wish I could put the tranquillity in a bottle. I stroll along the stony path, now overrun with grass. But before I reach the white gate, a red squirrel leaps over it, and a bee follows, flying to the sweet-smelling lavender. I always tell my wife that if no bees come to our garden, there's no point having one. The early morning stroll to my riverside spot is quick through the forest, but I take it slow, guided by the gentle breeze. This forest has thrived as my faithful friend throughout the decades.

From: *In the Stillness* by Hannah Murphy, Adult winner in the Scottish Wildlife Trust's 2024 Words of the Wild writing competition.

09

Thousands of trees were visible below, a kaleidoscope of sage, olive, and emerald greens. A peaceful paradise. Flocks of blackbirds contrasted with the deep blue sky, spreading their wings far as they sailed through the air without a care about school, jobs, or any type of stress. Just pure freedom and happiness with the sun's warm embrace.

From: *Clara and the Golden Eagle* by Sarthak Vijay (aged 13), shortlisted entrant in the Scottish Wildlife Trust's 2024 Words of the Wild writing competition.

10

Into the cave, where shadows dwell,
I wander forth, a curious spell.
The air is cool, a breath of night,
Soft whispers echo, out of sight.

My steps resound on stone so cold,
A rhythmic beat, both young and old.
The scent of earth, rich and deep,
Fills my lungs, a secret to keep.

The faint drip-drop of water's grace,
A crystal tear in this darkened space.
It splashes lightly, a tender kiss,
On stalagmites, a timeless bliss.

From: *The Tender Sight* by Daniel Otsapa (aged 13), shortlisted entrant in the Scottish Wildlife Trust's 2024 Words of the Wild writing competition.

11

A heron was standing frozen at the water's edge, gunmetal grey and steely-eyed, poised over the drifting kelp. There was a penetrating fine rain falling, hardly more than a mist, and all was still, as if paused. The hills across the loch, only a few hundred yards distant, were barely visible through the smirr, just a shadow of themselves. Though this was a sea-loch ... here was twenty miles inland from the open ocean. There was no trace of a wave on its surface; the waters were so smooth and unmarked they seemed stretched, swollen like the skin of a balloon. It felt as though a single jab of the heron's bill and the whole scene would burst apart.

From: *The Last Wildnerness* by Neil Ansett

12

Here, in this fastness
light and oceans blaze,
tides collide,
heathers swell like the sea,
and there are sounds
on the edge of hearing;
gulls like old regrets,
the soft wash of water
like a mother's breath.

From: *Fastness* by Hugh McMillan ([full poem here](#))
