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**SCENES**, an independent digest of environmental news in Scotland, was launched in 1987 by Dr James Fenton. Issues 49 to 161 were edited and published by Michael and Sue Scott. It is for anyone with an interest in the land and sea, whether professional or amateur. It is based solely on published material, and contains only news, with no editorial comment or opinion.

**SCENES** is published monthly, and comes out in the month following the title month.

**NOTE:** dates in square brackets relate to the most recent reference in **SCENES**.

**WEBSITE:** [www.scenes.org.uk](http://www.scenes.org.uk)

**DEADLINES:** News releases and press cuttings for inclusion in **SCENES** are welcomed from organisations and individuals. Please post, or email, them to the address below, by the end of each month.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** The basic annual subscription is £50. Concessions are available for small firms and charities (£28), individuals, and outworkers with a main subscription (£22), students and seniors (£18) and for extra copies sent to the same address (£12).

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ISSN 0955-226X

Printed by Printsmith Lochaber Ltd



## CONSERVATION

### PEATLANDS

£15m of new funding has been allocated to the restoration of Scotland's peatlands over the next two years by the Scottish Government [Oct 12].

Paul Wheelhouse, the environment & climate change minister, said: "Our peatlands cover almost a fifth of Scotland and are key habitats for much of our wildlife. We also know that peatlands play a role in carbon capture helping reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and they can fulfil an important part in natural flood management as a means of slowing the flow of water downstream within a river catchment. If we continue to improve the condition of our peatlands and bogs, then our habitats will undoubtedly experience the benefit, as will our economy. This money will go towards vital work to preserve and safeguard Scotland's peatlands. The importance of restoring peat-forming habitats which have been drained or damaged cannot be underestimated and the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring Scotland's peatlands are returned to good condition."

Funds have already made available under the Scottish Government's Green Stimulus package, with a wide range of projects already supported across Scotland.

Aspects of the developing Peatland Plan for Scotland will be implemented. See: [www.snh.gov.uk/climate-change/what-snh-is-doing/green-stimulus-peatland-restoration/](http://www.snh.gov.uk/climate-change/what-snh-is-doing/green-stimulus-peatland-restoration/)

### COMMON CRANES

The *BBC News* website reported that common cranes have successfully bred in Scotland for the first time since the 16th Century. RSPB Scotland said that two chicks have been raised at the Loch of Strathbeg nature reserve near Fraserburgh in the past two years. The birds typically undertake regular migrations and small numbers have turned up on the east coast of Scotland in recent years, raising hopes of a re-colonisation.

### ORKNEY VOLE

Aberdeen University, together with Cornell University, has been working on the Orkney vole's genealogy. The animal is unique to Orkney and is larger than the common vole found elsewhere in Britain. The archaeological record from Orkney suggests that the voles most likely arrived with early farmers or through Neolithic maritime trade and exchange networks, some 5,100 years ago. DNA analysis now shows that European common voles were likely to have been brought to Orkney by farmers from the coast of Belgium.

The study was published in *Molecular Ecology*.

### RARE SNAIL

The *BBC News* website reported that a rare snail, *Pupilla pratensis*, has been found at Braelangwell Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest on the Black Isle in Easter Ross. It has previously been recorded at only one other site in Britain, also on the Black Isle; it is usually found in Scandinavia and Poland and measures 4 mm long by about 1.5 mm wide.

The SSSI was designated for Geyer's whorl snail and the round-mouthed whorl snail.

### SEED FLY

The *BBC News* website reported that a survey, commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), recorded Fonseca's seed fly, *Botanophila fonsECAI*, only in an area about 100 metres long and just a few metres wide at the Dornoch Firth. It is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan-listed species.

The report suggests further research is needed because so few flies were found in the latest survey; more were recorded in the 1970s and 1980s. This could indicate a decline in numbers, or that the latest survey missed the insects' peak activity. The report recommends trapping flies and also looking for Fonseca's seed fly at other places with suitable habitat; it has only been found so far at Dornoch.

Potential sites have been identified near Brora, Keiss and Durness in the Highlands and dunes between Lossiemouth and Aberdeen.

### BUTTERFLIES

The Big Butterfly Count in Scotland recorded almost two thirds more individual butterflies in the hot summer of 2013 than in 2012, the worst year on record following a series of poor summers.

Both large white and small white numbers were up by more than 200%. Small tortoiseshell numbers were up by 300% compared to 2012 and peacock numbers up by more than 700%. The comma, which only returned to Scotland early in this century, also had a good year.

14 of the 19 Big Butterfly Count species that occur in Scotland increased in 2013 compared with 2012, and 11 of these were up by over 100%.

See: [www.bigbutterflycount.org](http://www.bigbutterflycount.org)

• *The Strathspey & Badenoch Herald* reported that small copper butterflies have been discovered on the Mossie at Grantown-on-Spey. They were relatively common in eastern coastal sites in the Highlands between 1980 and 1996.

### RED SQUIRRELS

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels (SSRS) studied sightings of squirrels at 95 feeder boxes on the front line between species in central and north east Scotland. Greys were seen at 20% of the feeder boxes this year compared with almost 37% last year, although in this area sightings of reds were also reduced.

Dr Mel Tonkin, of SSRS, said: "The most surprising thing to come from this report is the results from the south, where we have not surveyed before. It shows red squirrels in the area – something we did not know until now – and this despite the presence of squirrelpox. This could also be down to the work of SSRS in controlling grey squirrel numbers."

Two harsh winters in a row took a toll on grey squirrels while the native species was able to withstand weeks of cold and snow. Extensive culling of greys has also had a significant effect on numbers. The red squirrel population has stabilised and greys are greatly reduced. The report said: "Sustained trapping effort may therefore prevent this species [greys] from rebounding, while allowing red squirrels to take advantage of any improvements in food availability by autumn."

**CAPERCAILLIE**

The *BBC News* website reported that capercaillie have bred successfully for the first time in three years in Anagach Woods, Grantown-on-Spey. Five chicks raised in a nest at Anagach have fledged. Good summer weather and careful management of recreational visitors in the wood are thought to have helped their success.

• The *BBC News* website reported that the Scottish Gamekeeper's Association (SGA) said that not enough was being done to control pine martens and capercaillie were 'doomed' to extinction if measures were not taken. A managed scientific trial using live traps to capture and transfer pine martens away from capercaillie areas should be undertaken during the breeding season in the Cairngorms. The SGA said: "Such a localised trial may establish the benefits or otherwise to capercaillie survival in the core area, if pine marten were removed."

SNH said: "We published two reports in 2011 which looked at this subject. One did not find a direct link between pine marten numbers and capercaillie breeding success. The other found a link when the effects of weather were also taken into account. So the ecological situation is complex. We are keen to take forward the research looking at the role of predation alongside the effects of land use and climate."

The SGA said that it warned, 12 years ago, that predation by pine martens, foxes and crows would imperil capercaillie. Members of the Scottish Government's Biodiversity Action Plan group for capercaillie had acknowledged the need for a trial removal of pine martens from core areas to assess the problem. However no research licence has been granted.

Duncan Orr-Ewing, of RSPB Scotland, agreed that urgent action was required to help save capercaillie, and the role of the pine marten considered. But both species were scarce and protected under wildlife laws, he said. He thought it was much too early to embark on a trial removal without considering other options such as increased deer reduction measures, deer fence removal to reduce mortality of capercaillie through fence strikes and diversionary feeding. He said: "It is also hugely important to remember that in other countries, such as Sweden, capercaillie and pine marten live side by side, where predation occurs, and neither species is endangered. Levels of predation of capercaillie by pine martens recorded by RSPB Scotland at Abernethy are similar to Sweden and elsewhere on the European continent."

**WILDCATS**

The Scottish Government has announced a new £2m wildcat action plan, to be led by SNH [May 13]. Only 35 Scottish wildcats are thought to survive in the wild and it is feared that mass cross-breeding with feral domestic cats means extinction of the species is imminent unless swift action is taken. The action plan aims to reverse the decline of wildcats within six years by reducing the chances of cross breeding with domestic cats and lowering the risk to wildcats from feline diseases.

By 2019, the partnership project aims to have identified and secured at least five stable populations of Scottish wildcats in the wild; promoted in these areas greater awareness of the threats to wildcats from feral cats, domestic cats and hybrids; ensured that householders and others in wildcat hot spots' recognise the importance of having their cats neutered and vaccinated and have a better understanding of wildcat distribution, numbers and the extent of hybridisation with domestic cats.

The *BBC News* website reported that five areas of Scottish wildcat habitat are to be targeted in a £2m project, as yet not fully funded. The Heritage Lottery Fund is to give £873,000 towards the 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.

Steve Piper, formerly chairman of the Scottish Wildcat Association, said: "In short, anything that looks roughly two-thirds wildcat will be classified as a wildcat. The most certain side effect of setting standards so low is that pure and near-pure wildcats will be condemned to hybridise down to the lowest common denominator. This isn't the day that the Scottish wildcat was saved; it is the day that it was forced into extinction. The action plan is PR fluff. This is a shameful effort from the government after an entire year of consultation and a truly tragic day for the Scottish wildcat, which deserves so much better."

An SNH spokesman said: "We have recently commissioned further research to establish current levels of hybridisation in key populations. If we find cats which are of good ancestry that is fantastic, but we need to be pragmatic."

• The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and The Aspinall Foundation are leading on developing plans for a conservation breeding programme. This will draw on existing captive collections where suitable animals exist. It will also likely require that wildcats are taken from the wild under licence from SNH with the specific purpose of breeding for conservation reintroductions. A well-planned breeding programme is expected to complement support of the wild population and deliver conservation benefits.

The Aspinall Foundation is to establish a breeding centre for wildcats, Wildcat Haven, on Carna, an island in Loch Sunart, Ardnamurchan. Work at the centre will be led by Dr Paul O'Donoghue, who holds the only trapping licence for wildcats. Field trials have been taking place on Carna for three years. Separate work on the mainland will trap and neuter thousands of feral cats, allowing the pure wildcats bred at the island sanctuary to be released into the wild.

Damian Aspinall, of the Foundation, said: "We just don't believe wildcats have the luxury of that time before they become extinct. Our initiative means that litters of pure wildcats will be born safely and will be ready for when the government's action plan receives funding."

Dr O'Donoghue said: "The west coast holds the only short-term chance for a realistic conservation effort. The geography means that wildcat havens can be set up where the species can be protected from hybridisation."

See: [www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2050](http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2050)

**SEABIRDS**

The *BBC News* website reported that end-of-season seabird counts showed a severe decline in numbers of common guillemots at RSPB Scotland's coastal reserves.

The numbers of guillemots at Dunnet Head on the Caithness coast have dropped by around 45% since the last seabird census in 2000, falling from 8,980 to 4,880. The RSPB reserve at Noup Cliffs on Orkney recorded a 41% decline over the same period, while the colony at Ailsa Craig in the Firth of Clyde reduced by more than 27%.

Food shortages and the effects of climate change were also having an impact on razorbills and puffins.

Black guillemots have been singled out for protection under plans for Marine Protected Area

(MPA) designation, currently under consultation.

Allan Whyte, of RSPB Scotland, said: "Scotland is home to 24 species of breeding seabird and it is baffling that the Scottish government chooses to ignore all but one when designating MPAs. Puffins, kittiwakes, common guillemots and the rest are struggling to survive these tough times. The Scottish government can and must throw these birds a lifeline and designate MPAs to protect this amazing group of species in danger of disappearing from our coasts."

A Scottish Government spokesman said it had asked SNH and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to provide formal advice on what additional marine Special Protection Areas (SPAs) were required for the conservation of seabirds. The advice is expected to be received at the end of 2013. He said: "Also, we are protecting a number of sand eel habitats which will help protect a vital food source of most seabirds. Other measures being taken that assist in the conservation of seabirds include the control of non-native species, surveys of seabirds at sea and continued monitoring of sites. Seabirds are already well represented in the network through SPAs."

**DRAGON FINDER**

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a grant of £422,400 to Scottish Dragon Finder, a new project which will help to conserve Scotland's amphibian and reptile species over the next four and a half years. There are ten native species of herptiles in Scotland, of which seven are priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. These include the great-crested newt, the natterjack toad and the grass snake.

There is an urgent need for more data on where the animals are and their populations, with current evidence suggesting the creatures are in decline. Dragon Finder will teach thousands of people how to survey, record and protect these animals.

**WILD PARK 2020**

Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority has launched the *Wild Park 2020 National Park Biodiversity Action Plan Consultative Draft* which sets out the strategy for achieving the long term vision for the National Park's biodiversity. The draft plan outlines over 80 projects which the Park and partner organisations aim to achieve over the plan period.

Contact: email: [wildpark2020@lochlomond-trossachs.org](mailto:wildpark2020@lochlomond-trossachs.org); *Wild Park 2020 Consultation, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority, Carrochan, Balloch, G83 8EG* See: [www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wildpark/](http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wildpark/)



**FARMING**

**EU FUNDING**

The Scottish Government has announced that funding for farmers, which was due to end in 2013, will continue for another year. Delays in Europe passing necessary legislation meant some streams of support faced a year-long gap until the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) can come into effect in 2015.

Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) is a £1.2 billion programme, co-financed by the European Union and the Scottish Government, which provides a comprehensive package of support to rural Scotland delivering measures in support of economic, social and environmental priorities. The Scottish Government has allocated approximately £70m to rural development in the 2014-15 draft budget. Direct (Pillar 1) payments to farmers, which are worth £0.5 billion, are funded by the EU.

Direct (Pillar 1) payments to farmers worth approximately £0.5 billion will go ahead as normal

and as much as possible of the £1.2 billion SRDP will continue next year. Under current European CAP transition regulations, however, not all SRDP schemes can continue. The Scottish Government is continuing to press hard for a full roll-over of the Rural Development programme in 2014.

The main elements of the transition arrangements for 2014 are as follows:

- Pillar 1 of the CAP (direct payments to farmers) – the current system based on Single Farm Payments will essentially remain in place for 2014, with the new system starting in 2015
- The Less Favoured Area Support Scheme, which provides support to farm business operating in remote and fragile areas, will continue in 2014 with a 2015 payment date as normal
- Agri-environment contracts (including organic agreements) that were due to expire on December 31, 2013 will be extended for another year
- Woodland creation and woodland management projects will be able to go ahead in 2014-15 under contracts being approved up to the end of this year
- The main elements of the Crofting Counties Agricultural Grant Scheme will continue under a state aid scheme although continued funding for drainage schemes will depend on the final transition regulations agreed by the European Commission
- The Scottish Government is making a strong case for transition regulations to allow continued support for Scotland's LEADER scheme; a decision is expected from Europe in November
- There will be no new Land Managers Options applications for 2014 as this type of non-competitive support will not be permitted under the new regulatory framework put in place by the European Commission. Instead, the Scottish Government is working on options to ensure the new SRDP in 2015 will provide effective and accessible support to farmers in Scotland.

#### DEER FARMING

Funding of almost £100,000 has been made available to set up deer farm demonstration units in Scotland, the first project of its kind in the UK.

Environment secretary, Richard Lochhead, said: "The current CAP deal has not benefited deer farmers but, after making it a priority, we achieved support for them in the new CAP and they will be included from the outset."

The funding will create two deer farm and demonstration units.

#### GEESE

The *West Highland Free Press* reported that a three year pilot project to control the numbers of greylag geese in Uist is to be extended to Lewis and Harris. The project will allow geese to be sold commercially [Aug 13]. A bag limit will be set for crofters and landowners, in order to bring breeding numbers back under control.



## WOODLANDS

#### NATIONAL TREE

A public consultation on a national tree for Scotland has been launched by the Scottish Government [Jun 13]. See: <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/forestry-commission-scotland/national-tree>

#### LAEL FOREST

Ullapool Community Trust (UCT) has applied to the National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS) to lease two areas of land in Lael Forest amounting

to approximately six hectares. The land includes the Allt a'Bhraighe and the Allt a'Mhuillin watercourses in Lael Forest. UCT is planning to develop small scale run-of-river hydro schemes.

See: [www.forestry.gov.uk/nfls](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/nfls)

#### EAGLES & WOODLAND

Forestry Commission (FC) Scotland has published *Expanding Woodlands in Special Protection Areas for Golden Eagles*. It provides guidance on how to plan and assess proposals for new woodlands in those parts of Scotland that are legally protected for golden eagles. Factors taken into account include the proposed location of woodland in relation to eagles' nest sites and use of their territory as well as the scale, structure and composition of the proposed woodland.

The guidance reviews the evidence for how golden eagles respond to woodland in their territories and aims to help foresters identify whether their proposed new woods would affect golden eagle breeding success or survival. It also helps foresters to adjust schemes to achieve a conservation benefit for eagles. A model for predicting golden eagle range use can be used together with field surveys to assess eagle use of areas that are being considered for woodland creation.

The guidance has been put together by golden eagle experts working with FC Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and RSPB Scotland. It has been trialled with forestry agents in several woodland creation proposals in Argyll.

Stephen Austin from SNH said: "Broadleaved woodland and sensitively designed conifer woodlands can enhance the biodiversity of some golden eagle ranges, increasing prey availability and the sustainability of territories. We very much welcome this advice from FC Scotland. It supports golden eagles and helps achieve national forestry targets."

Richard Evans of RSPB Scotland said: "The new guidance shows how appropriately planned land use change can easily be incorporated into large nature conservation sites. Its publication should make it easier to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right place not only to meet woodland targets, but also to provide a home for a wide range of species, including golden eagles."

See: [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpn103.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpn103.pdf)

#### ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

FC Scotland has published guidance, *Landscape Scale Ecosystem Restoration*. This is a cross-boundary, cross-agency approach to large scale land management which can improve Scotland's biodiversity and benefit the environment, communities and the economy.

The project was commissioned by FC Scotland working with land managers, partner agencies and others including SNH, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, National Parks, and environmental and land management bodies.

40 projects across Scotland, run by conservation charities, government agencies, private estates and communities, are featured as demonstrating the principles of this approach. There are currently 23 projects in single ownership, nine partnership projects with multiple owners of which six are led by non-governmental organisations and three by government agencies. There are two aggregate projects, The Great Trossachs Forest and, less formally, the Cairngorm Forests in Strathspey, where several projects have come together to form a large partnership.

Habitats under restoration include native woodland (24 projects), mosaics of woodland, heath, mire and montane (18 projects), peat bog (three projects) and riparian habitats (two

projects). Projects focused on river catchments are also being developed and FC Scotland's project at Loch Katrine was established as a response to the need to safeguard drinking water quality.

See: [www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infod-9a5ewu](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infod-9a5ewu)

#### TREE PLANTING TRIAL

SNH is trialling a novel approach to tree-planting at Creag Meagaidh and Beinn Eithe National Nature Reserves, both managed by SNH. In areas with deer, it is normal for trees to be planted with fencing to protect rarer native saplings but trees will be planted without fences in the trial. Methods will be trialled to establish tree species which struggle to gain a foothold due to deer browsing. Tall saplings will be planted on steep slopes, or inaccessible areas in which the leading shoot is out of reach of deer (sabrae planting); rarer species will be hidden in the landscape, making them less visible and accessible to deer; the leading shoot will be covered with 'budcaps' and harmless chemical repellents will be used to make the tree unpalatable.

If species can be established without costly and unsightly fences, it will help woodland managers to create greater biodiversity. See: [www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2035](http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2035)

#### RAASAY WOODLAND

Raasay residents, wanting to buy woodland on the island, have said that the asking price for woodland is too high for a community group. The 300 ha (740 acres) of FC Scotland land is valued at £400,000. Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE) said that EU restrictions reflected timbers' status as a commodity that could be traded between EU states. HIE said that it was working closely with the Scottish Government to legitimately maximise the amount of support that could be offered to communities wanting to buy forestry land.

#### WOODLAND EXPANSION

*The Herald* reported that Forestry Commission Scotland, in a letter to Alex Ferguson MSP in relation to tree planting targets, and released under freedom of information rules said: "This Scottish figure of 100 million trees [to be planted by 2015] was based on achieving 50,000 hectares of woodland creation over that period at an average stocking of 2,000 trees per hectare. On this basis, planting over the past three years equates to new planting of nearly 42 million trees, achieving 42% of the 'pledge' to date."

Mr Ferguson said that 58 million trees were still needed to be planted in Scotland within the next 15 months to realise the pledge made in 2010 – an 'unachievable target.'

The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) called for a reduction in deer numbers to encourage natural tree regeneration where tree growth is prevented through overgrazing. SWT said that this would be a cost effective way of keeping to the Scottish Government's commitments.



## FISHFARMING & FISHERIES

#### FISHFARM PRODUCTION

Marine Scotland Science has published the *Scottish Fish Farm Production Survey 2012*, which details statistics on the employment, production and fish escapes from Scottish fishfarms. It is structured to follow industry trends within the trout, salmon and other farmed species sectors. Some statistics are given for the period 1992-2012.

The main findings are that the production tonnage of Atlantic salmon increased by 2.7% in 2012 to 162,223 tonnes. This is the highest

recorded production since 2003 and follows on from a 2.5% increase in 2011. The production tonnage of rainbow trout increased by 22.8% in 2012 to 5,670 tonnes. This follows on from a 10.1% reduction in 2011. Brown trout/sea trout production decreased from 61 tonnes in 2011 to 42 tonnes in 2012. See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/marine/fish-shellfish/FHI/surveys](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/marine/fish-shellfish/FHI/surveys)

### SEA-LICE

The *BBC News* website reported that the Salmon & Trout Association (S&TA) analysed the first two quarterly sea-lice reports released by the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) [Aug 13]. In June 2013, 47 salmon farms on the Scottish mainland and in the Hebrides were in areas where average sea-lice numbers exceeded the industry's own limits.

In each of the previous five months, at least one-quarter (35 farms) were in this category.

S&TA Scotland called on the Scottish Government to introduce statutory controls on fishfarm sea-lice numbers to protect juvenile wild fish from 'picking up lethal infestations in the sea lochs.'

Scott Landsburgh of SSPO said: "It is disappointing that the S&TA has, yet again, chosen to re-analyse published industry information in an attempt to rewrite a good news story. Scottish salmon farmers have responded positively to calls for greater openness and transparency, and detailed information has been available on the SSPO's website for over 18 months now. In contrast, the wild salmon fishing industry holds vast amounts of information on things like catches and angling effort that could be used constructively to inform the debate. Yet despite repeated requests for information that parallels what the salmon farmers are publishing, no efforts have been made by them to share this for the common good."

### NESS & BEAULY SALMON

The *Herald* reported that a major strategy to reverse the decline of the local salmon population in the Ness and Beaully river systems is underway. The Ness District Salmon Fishery Board, in partnership with the Beaully District Salmon Fishery Board, has agreed a longer delay with the operators of two netting stations in the Moray Firth. The fishery is closed on 31 August and will not resume until at least May next year. The traditional start to the netting season is February 16, although the Salmon Net Fishing Association of Scotland has been promoting a voluntary delay until 1 April for the past 12 years, in response to conservation concerns.

One-off compensation payments have been made to Sandy Patience, operator of the Kincurdie station off Rosemarkie on the Black Isle, and Graham Sutherland, at Longman Point near Inverness.

It is estimated that the move could result in more than one million extra salmon eggs in local river systems, resulting in the return of as many as 1,000 new fish to the rivers over the coming years.

### SALMON & SEA TROUT

Scotland's chief statistician has published *Salmon and Sea Trout Fishery Statistics for the 2012 Season*.

The total reported rod catch (retained and released) of wild salmon for 2012 is 86,013. It is the tenth highest rod catch on record and is 95% of the previous five-year average.

The proportion of the rod catch accounted for by catch and release is the highest recorded. In 2012, 91% of rod caught spring salmon was released, as was 74% of the annual rod catch.

Catch and effort for fixed engine and net & coble net fisheries remain at historically low levels. Reported catches were 12,584 and 3,646 respectively, 5% and 1% of the maximum reported since records began in 1952. Fishing effort in these fisheries was 236.5 trap months and 78.5 crew months, the fifth and sixth lowest, respectively over the same time period.

The total reported rod catch of sea trout (retained and released) for 2012 is 22,051. Total reported catch decreased by 3% compared to the previous five year average and was the fifth lowest in the 61 year time series.

The proportion of the total rod catch accounted for by catch and release remains among the highest since records began in 1994 and accounted for 71% of the catch in 2012.

There are clear differences among geographic regions in the relative strength of the 2012 rod catch. All mainland regions in the west of Scotland reported catches within the lowest eleven recorded for their region over the period 1952 to 2012. The reported catch in Moray Firth and North East regions were, similarly, the lowest and fifth lowest respectively over the same period. Catches in the East and North regions in 2012 were, on the other hand, both among the top ten catches recorded within their respective regions, while the catch recorded in the Outer Hebrides was close to the mid-point in the time series.

See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/science/Publications/stats/SalmonSeaTroutCatches](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/science/Publications/stats/SalmonSeaTroutCatches)

### HERRING

The *BBC News* website reported that talks over the Faroe Islands' decision to treble the amount of herring it catches have ended with no agreement [Aug 13]. However, the Faroese government welcomed an agreement to form a scientific working group to examine the stock, subject to the final approval of Iceland and Russia.

Ian Gatt, of the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association, said: "A scientific working group is hardly a significant step forward and will do nothing to resolve the issue in the short-term. What was particularly astonishing was that despite the requests by the EU, Norway, Iceland and Russia for the Faroese to table an offer of a new and more realistic quota level, this was not forthcoming from the Faroese and they had absolutely nothing to offer. Even more worrying was the fact that they gave no assurances that they would not set a high unilateral Total Allowable Catch next year."

### MACKEREL QUOTA

A consultation has been launched about the amount of mackerel quota that should be allocated to inshore fishermen in 2014 and in future years [Aug 13].

Mackerel is Scotland's most valuable fishery. In 2011, mackerel to the value of £163m was landed by Scottish fishing vessels. The majority of this fish was landed by offshore trawlers, but some 400 tonnes was landed by smaller (10 metres and under) inshore vessels.

The Scottish Government is seeking views about what amount of fish quotas should be allocated for inshore fishing, and is contemplating an increase in the allocation in 2014. The government is also interested in views about the role that local groups play in the management of inshore fisheries. The consultation ends on 6 December. See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/Sea-Fisheries/17681/inshoremackerelconsultation](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/Sea-Fisheries/17681/inshoremackerelconsultation)

### SEA FISH LANDINGS

Scotland's chief statistician has published *Scottish Sea Fisheries Statistics 2012*. These show that the value of fish landed by Scottish vessels in 2012

decreased by 9% in real terms from 2011, which was the highest value of the century. The quantity of fish landed increased by 2% [Apr 13].

365,000 tonnes of sea fish and shellfish were landed by Scottish based vessels in 2012, with a value of £466m. The decrease in the overall value of landings was driven by reductions in the value of all species types. Pelagic landings decreased by 11% to £166m. Demersal landings decreased by 8% to £143m. Shellfish landings decreased by 6% to £157m.

Many of the decreases in the value of key fish species stem from reductions in price. Mackerel is the most valuable stock to the Scottish fleet, accounting for 28% (£131m) of the total value of Scottish landings. In 2012, it decreased in real terms value by 21% from 2011, driven by a 14% fall in price and an 8% decrease in the quantity landed to 134,000 tonnes. However, the value of herring, the other key pelagic species, increased by 68% in real terms to £29m.

Landings of North Sea haddock, North Sea cod, North Sea whiting, and North Sea saithe exceeded 90% quota uptake. In comparison to 2011, uptake for North Sea monkfish and North Sea nephrops was low, 62% and 54% respectively. The reduction in quota uptake of nephrops is a result of its poor availability in fishing grounds. Quota uptake for North Sea herring, West of Scotland herring and West of Scotland mackerel all reached or exceeded 100%.

The number of active fishing vessels based in Scotland was 2,046 at the end of 2012, representing a decrease of 49 vessels (2%) from 2011, and the smallest recorded fleet size. From the end of 2011, there has been a loss of 22 vessels in the 10m and under fleet to 1,448 vessels and a loss of 27 vessels in the over 10m fleet to 598 vessels. The demersal sector has reduced to 215 vessels, the shellfish sector reduced to 359 vessels but the pelagic sector remains the same with 24 vessels.

The number of fishermen employed on Scottish based vessels was 4,747 at the end of 2012, 249 less than in 2011 (5%). This brings the 2012 fisherman employment figure to the lowest recorded level.

See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/2502](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/2502)



## MARINE

### WHALE STRANDINGS

A pilot whale, stranded in the Firth of Forth at Silverknowes, north of Edinburgh, died. It is thought to have suffered from a brain disorder, although test results are still awaited.

A four metre juvenile minke whale was put down after it became stranded at Crombie Point near Torryburn in Fife; it was in very thin condition. A pygmy sperm whale stranded off Banff in Aberdeenshire.

- 40 pilot whales were safely herded out to deeper waters in Shetland under the remote guidance of British Divers Marine Life Rescue.

- The *Herald* reported that a rare Sowerby's beaked whale and its calf became stranded in the shallow waters of Village Bay, Hirta in the St Kilda archipelago. The mother died, but the calf swam away into open water; it is unlikely to survive on its own.

The *BBC News* website reported that Dr Andrew Brownlow, of Scottish Rural College, said: "Based on what we know at the moment, it is unlikely that the strandings are linked because each has involved a different species of whale and initial indications would show they were suffering from different problems. However, we cannot be sure until our full investigations are complete."

The Scottish Government-funded Scottish Marine

Animal Stranding Scheme collates, investigates and reports information on stranded marine animals for Scotland. See: [www.strandings.org](http://www.strandings.org)

**BATHING WATERS**

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) reported that all 83 bathing beaches achieved a European mandatory standard and 47 (57%) additionally gained the stricter guideline standard. It is the first 100% pass rate since 2006, when Scotland also experienced a dry summer.

SEPA took 1,650 bathing water samples over 107 days since the season began on 1 June, with most being tested 20 times. Eight individual samples exceeded the limits and failed to reach mandatory level (0.5%). EU rules mean that if bathing water sampling fails more than once at the monitoring location, then it has failed overall compliance at the end of the season. Three samples were also taken on dates when SEPA predicted poor water quality due to rainfall, and were discounted as appropriate electronic signage was in place advising against bathing.

Between 25 and 31 July, SEPA declared an 'abnormal situation' for Stonehaven bathing water and issued appropriate signage warnings in line with regulations following a lightning strike damage to a sewage plant.

**MPA SURVEYS**

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has published a series of reports of surveys carried out in the marine environment, part of wider work on identifying features for inclusion in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). They will also help inform future decisions about marine renewable energy development.

SNH worked with Marine Scotland, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Heriot-Watt University and the Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST).

The reports include explorations off the west coast, Caithness and the Northern Isles, and in the Clyde Sea and Arran coast.

See: [www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/new](http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/new)

- SNH and Marine Scotland Science have surveyed the seabed in Loch Broom, Little Loch Broom, the area around the Summer Isles and the Shiant East Bank in The Minch, all in the northwest. The Northwest Sea Lochs & Summer Isles, important for its underwater landforms, has been identified as a possible MPA.

**MARINE GEODIVERSITY**

A report, *Assessing the Sensitivity of Geodiversity Features in Scotland's Seas to Pressures Associated with Human Activities*, was commissioned by SNH and the JNCC as part of their work on identifying marine features for inclusion within MPAs. It concluded that geological and geomorphological features of the seabed, proposed for protection in MPAs around Scotland, are highly resistant to most human activities. This is because they are typically composed of hard geology which has a low susceptibility to erosion.

See: [www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned\\_reports/590.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/590.pdf)

- A separate SNH and JNCC report, *Characterising Scotland's Marine Environment to Define Search Locations for New MPAs. Part 2: The Identification of Key Geodiversity Areas in Scottish Waters* has been published. See: [www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned\\_reports/432.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/432.pdf)

**ARRAN NTZ**

A report has been published by the University of York, *Summary of Research within Lamlash Bay No-Take Zone*, which confirms that the No-Take Zone

(NTZ) in Lamlash Bay on Arran is promoting the recovery of scallops, lobster, fish and seabed habitats. The research findings were welcomed by COAST, which promoted the original creation of the NTZ [Sep 08]. COAST is now actively campaigning for the coastal area around the southern half of Arran, including the NTZ, to be designated one of 33 MPAs in Scotland.

Kenneth Gibson MSP submitted a motion to the Scottish Parliament recognising the achievements of the Lamlash Bay NTZ, on its fifth anniversary, which has cross party support.

See: [www.arrancoast.com/pdf2013/Summary\\_of\\_York\\_University\\_research\\_within\\_Lamlash\\_Bay\\_No\\_Take\\_Zone\\_2013.pdf](http://www.arrancoast.com/pdf2013/Summary_of_York_University_research_within_Lamlash_Bay_No_Take_Zone_2013.pdf)

**FIRTH OF LORN**

The Marine Conservation Society reported that a Seasearch diving survey in the Firth of Lorn, Argyll, showed that jewel anemones and sea fans are now abundant in the area, where scallop dredging has been banned for six years [Mar 07].

**CORKSCREW DEATHS**

The *Sunday Herald* reported the Sea Mammal Research Unit at St Andrews University, in its latest report for Marine Scotland, has blamed particular types of ducted propellers, widely used in marine vessels for many offshore industries, for seal deaths [Sep 11]. Animals die from distinctive 'corkscrew' cuts spiralling around their bodies when they are trapped between ships' propellers and their covers. Of the 80 confirmed 'corkscrew deaths' 32 were common (harbour) seals, some populations of which have been in sharp decline, and 48 were grey seals.

A coalition of ten environmental and animal welfare groups has called on ministers to ban the use of ducted propellers in new offshore developments, and to restrict their use by ships in areas where seals are at risk. A joint letter argues that the best way to prevent more deaths is to prohibit the use of ducted propellers as part of the licence conditions for new developments. It also suggests offshore industries should be asked to report and restrict the use of the propellers close to seal populations.

David Balston, of the UK Chamber of Shipping, said: "The UK Chamber has, over the last two years, tried therefore to engage with the lead researchers working in this area, offering our expertise and that of our members to find a practical solution, but without success."

The offshore oil and gas industry has promised to work with others to develop mitigation techniques, if they are deemed appropriate. A spokesman for Oil & Gas UK said: "There is insufficient data to enable a definitive conclusion to be drawn on the reasons for these injuries."

Scottish Renewables said some of the seal deaths pre-dated its activities, and that work should continue to identify the causes and 'any changes in working practices or design required to protect marine wildlife.'



**POLITICS & PARLIAMENT**

**DEER MANAGEMENT**

The Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs committee is to scrutinise how deer management agreements, which help control deer numbers across Scotland, are impacting on biodiversity, habitats and ultimately climate change [Aug 13]. The committee said that it will hold three evidence sessions this year.

Dr Maggie Keegan, of the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), said: "SWT believes that a crucial

step in determining how many deer to cull in any given area must be to assess the impacts on habitats of the current local deer population – this requires habitat monitoring. SWT knows from site condition monitoring of our nationally and internationally protected sites that nearly a quarter have been damaged because of overgrazing and trampling pressure. It is difficult to see how Scotland will achieve its 2020 biodiversity target, or its commitment to increasing woodland cover as part of mitigating and adapting to climate change, without getting deer numbers under control."



**GENERAL ENVIRONMENT**

**WILDLIFE CRIME**

*Wildlife Crime in Scotland – 2012 Annual Report* has been published. It shows that raptor poisonings have decreased in number from 30 in 2009 to three in 2012, although other forms of persecution remain high.

There were ten further police-recorded raptor crimes in 2012 ranging from egg theft to trapping and shooting. There were 68 recorded crimes in 2011/12 concerning badger offences, hunting with dogs and other acts of cruelty to animals.

RSPB Scotland said that, while the report highlights a welcome reduction in the number of reported poisoning incidents against birds of prey in 2012, it remains concerned that some criminals may have changed tactics from illegal poisoning to trapping, shooting and nest destruction. RSPB Scotland called for more resources to tackle and prevent these crimes, and for a parliamentary debate on the issue.

The report brings together key data from the Scottish Government Justice Department, the Crown Office, Procurator Fiscal Service, Police Scotland and the National Wildlife Crime Unit. See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/2382](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/2382)

**CITIZEN SCIENCE**

The Conservation Volunteers and Scotland's Environment Web are carrying out a research project to measure the influence that engagement in Citizen Science activities has upon participant's environmental values, attitudes and behaviours. They would like to hear from people who are already involved in biological recording and environmental monitoring by completing a brief online survey by 11 October. See: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1K0Ra0UagywqhV-a4jFFByvG5rO5\\_92ppWxHZUrNG1N4/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1K0Ra0UagywqhV-a4jFFByvG5rO5_92ppWxHZUrNG1N4/viewform)

**CARBON FOOTPRINT**

Scotland's chief statistician has published *Scotland's Carbon Footprint: 1998-2010*. This publication provides estimates of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions on a consumption basis; that is emissions that are associated with the spending of Scottish residents on goods and services, wherever in the world these emissions arise together with emissions directly generated by Scottish households.

The key points of the publication are:

- Scotland's carbon footprint (including emissions from all greenhouse gases) rose in 2010, after falling from a peak in 2007.
- Between 2009 and 2010, Scotland's carbon footprint increased by 4% following a 19% fall in 2009. From 1998, the footprint rose by 15% to a peak of 101.1 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO<sub>2</sub>e) in 2007 before falling to 78.7 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2009. In 2010, Scotland's carbon footprint was 82.2 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e, 6% less than in 1998.
- Similarly GHG emissions relating to Scottish final consumption of imports rose 34% between 1998 and a peak in 2007. Since 2007, emissions



from imports fell to a low in 2009 before increasing in 2010 to a level 4% less than in 1998.

- Emissions relating to Scottish consumption of goods and services produced in the UK, together with Scottish households direct consumption of fuel decreased by 8% between 1998 and 2010.

- Whilst Scotland's carbon footprint has fallen by 6% between 1998 and 2010, comparable emissions on a territorial basis (Scotland's production emissions) have fallen by 15%.

The report said that growing imports and increased car use both contributed to the rise in emission in 2010.

The environment & climate change minister, Paul Wheelhouse, said: "While the slight increase in emissions in 2010 is disappointing, it is in part due to the particularly cold weather and the associated increase in emissions from household heating." See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/5719](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/5719)

**AIR POLLUTION**

Scotland's chief statistician has released a report on Scottish emissions of carbon monoxide, ammonia, nitrogen oxides, sub-10 micron particulate matter (PM10), sulphur dioxide, lead and non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs) on the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory website.

Over the long term there have been reductions in emissions for all the pollutants. Since 1990, there have been decreases of 23% for ammonia, 58% for PM10, 65% for nitrogen oxides, 70% for NMVOCs, 79% for sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide and 99% for lead.

*Air Quality Pollutant Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: 1990 – 2011* was produced by Aether and Ricardo-AEA for the Scottish Government, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Department of Environment.

See: [http://naei.defra.gov.uk/reports/reports?report\\_id=763](http://naei.defra.gov.uk/reports/reports?report_id=763)

- The Scottish Government has published a 'roadmap' setting out its plans to help businesses and motorists switch to electric vehicles. It said that it wants the country's towns and cities to be free of emissions from petrol and diesel vehicles by 2050. By 2040 almost all new vehicles sold will be near zero-emission at the tailpipe; and by 2030 half of all fossil-fuelled vehicles will be phased out of urban environments across Scotland.

See: [www.greenerscotland.org/greener-travel/electric-vehicles/electric-vehicles-scotland](http://www.greenerscotland.org/greener-travel/electric-vehicles/electric-vehicles-scotland)

**BLANEFIELD SOIL**

The *BBC News* website reported that 13 residents in Blanehead face a combined bill of £633,000 to remove contaminated soil from their gardens [May 13]. The UK government has now said that it will not waive tax costs associated with the cleanup of their properties. The ground that the homes were built on was previously occupied by a Victorian calico print works, which was closed at the end of the 19th century. When developers built the current properties on the site in the 1950s no contamination was recorded. A routine sample of the land was taken by Stirling Council last year; arsenic and lead were discovered.

Anne McGuire MP pressed the UK Treasury minister, Sajid Javid, to put in place measures exempting the residents from landfill tax and VAT for the cleanup operation. She said that the taxes were adding up to 79% onto the costs payable for some of the 13 residents. Mr Javid said that, while he sympathised with the residents who through 'no fault of their own' faced the huge costs, he could not exempt them from the tax.

Stirling Council has so far agreed to pay £125,000 towards the cleanup of the contaminated land.

**MOTHERWELL TOXIC LAND**

The *BBC News* website reported that Collins Solicitors is no longer pursuing North Lanarkshire Council for compensation over claims that homes were built on toxic land on the Watling Street estate in Motherwell [Oct 12]. The firm, which is pursuing 42 claims on behalf of 78 residents, is still pursuing City Link Development Company Ltd and Scott Wilson (Scotland) Ltd for compensation. Traces of trichloroethylene were found in open ground close to homes, which 'far exceed stipulated safe levels.' Analysis of air samples, taken from 20 properties, revealed a significant number of chlorinated compounds and petroleum products in indoor air.

**HUNTERSTON JUDGEMENT**

*The Herald* reported that Marco McGinty asked the Court of Session in Edinburgh to rule against a plan to construct a 1,600 MW coal-fired power station at Hunterston, criticising the public consultation procedures [Oct 11]. Hunterston was added to the National Planning Framework for Scotland document at a late stage, limiting opportunities to comment. Mr McGinty said that he used the area for recreation as a birdwatcher, and that the effects on the environment would be devastating if the coal-fired power station went ahead.

The challenge to an earlier decision by the court has now been rejected. Judge Lord Brailsford ruled that Mr McGinty's demand for a judicial review was unsuccessful because he had waited too long before coming to court and because he did not have a strong enough reason to raise his action. Lord Brailsford said that previous court actions had established rules about who had the right to bring court actions in planning disputes. He added that it was neither desirable nor necessary that public bodies should be subject to persons, no matter how well-intentioned, whose links to a site were as remote as Mr McGinty's.

He said that in any case he would still have ruled there was no breach of the rules on public consultation.

Mr McGinty's appeal against the ruling claimed that Lord Brailsford's rejection of his right to sue had been overturned by a Supreme Court decision in another case. He also claimed the judge had been wrong in believing that there had been sufficient publicity about the Hunterston proposals to allow locals to object, and argued that Scottish ministers had not looked properly at alternatives to their power station plan. Mr McGinty also complained that the £30,000 cap set on the expenses he might have to find for the other side was too high.

Mary Church, of Friends of the Earth Scotland, said: "While it's good news that the court recognised Mr McGinty's right to take this case in the public interest, it is very disappointing that it has not taken this opportunity to reduce Mr McGinty's costs from an exorbitant £30,000 to a more reasonable £5,000 as reflected in the new rules of court."

**MIDGE UPDATE**

The numbers of biting midges in Scotland has fallen dramatically this year, according to official recording stations. With midges preferring conditions to be wet and warm, four of the five midge recording traps saw falls of up to 80% compared to last year's record.

Glen Affric recorded the biggest fall from nearly 4.8 million midges to just over 90,000. Argyll was down 44% to 3.5 million with the population in the Galloway Hills dropping 38% to 2.7 million.

In the Cairngorms, 860,000 were trapped compared to 1.21 million in 2012. Gairloch in Wester Ross saw a 2% increase to 1.32 million.

Dr Alison Blackwell, of Advanced Pest Solutions of Edinburgh, who runs the forecast, said: "The numbers were up three to four times in June and July on last year, which was itself a record, but after that they just died away in the hot and dry weather. The main first hatch of midges usually comes in May, but we had reports of people even being bitten in late March in previous years when it was warmer. Not this year though."

**WILD LAND**

The Scottish Government announced a public consultation over the map of Scotland's core wild land published earlier this year by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) [Apr 13].

Stuart Brooks, of the John Muir Trust (JMT), said: "Responses to the Scottish Planning Policy consultation document reveal a concerted assault on the core wild land map by energy corporations and property developers. They clearly see Scotland's wild land as a potential goldmine worth billions to their global shareholders. We expect that the Scottish Government will now come under ferocious pressure to either scrap the map, or to remove large tracts of wild land from the protection zone. These businesses have no expertise or interest in Scotland's landscape or ecology. Their only expertise and interest is in making profit. SNH has spent many years identifying Scotland's wild land, and establishing and refining clear geographical boundaries. This work must not be allowed to be undermined by the power of money. The message we will be sending to the Scottish Government is that our wild land is not a commodity to be bartered over, but a precious asset to be cherished, protected and restored for the benefit of our people, our wildlife and the wider world."

- JMT has analysed 150 submissions to the consultation document which contains the government's proposal to strengthen protection for 43 core areas of wild land as mapped by SNH [May 13]. The JMT said that the exercise showed two to one support for wild land protection.

It said those supporting wild land protection include individuals, environmental and other charities, outdoors organisations, businesses, local authorities, community councils, landowners and professional bodies.

Fewer than 50 responses oppose the proposals and the JMT said almost all were from those with a financial interest in making profit from wild land. More than two thirds of responses in opposition were submitted by companies based outside Scotland.

John Hutchison, of the JMT, said: "The negative responses from energy corporations and property developers confirm that industrialisation of our wild land is driven, not by concern over climate change, but by profit."

RWE NPower said: "We note there is a lack of consistency with respect to relative wildness ranking including in the core areas. We encourage the Scottish Government to revise the presentation of wild land within the current draft of Scottish Planning Policy."

**RAASAY SPORTING RIGHTS**

The Raasay Crofters' Association (RCA) has been offered the sporting rights on Raasay for an initial period of five years, with the option for an automatic five year extension, on the assumption that the RCA successfully meets the conditions set out in the lease [Apr 13]. The Scottish Government held a consultation on how best to manage Raasay's sporting rights in order to maximise community benefits in future.

See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/4791](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/4791)

**PEAT WILDFIRES**

The Herald reported that Glasgow University researchers examined land in the Cairngorms National Park that had a peat fire lasting for longer than a month in 2006; the smouldering fire covered more than ten acres. The flames ignited layers of peat that continued to burn as a sub-surface smouldering wildfire, after the initial surface blaze and despite several heavy rainfalls. All vegetation was killed and the area effectively sterilised. The environmental impact can last decades, if not centuries. Peat fires can release significant amounts of stored carbon.

Peat soils cover more than a fifth of Scotland's land area, with the deepest peat storing anything up to three billion tonnes of carbon, or ten times the amount stored in the whole of the UK's trees. Peat soils in Scotland could contain almost 25 times as much carbon as all other plant life in the UK.

The study calculated that, in total, the smouldering wildfire near Aviemore burnt between 0.1% and 0.3% of the estimated total amount of carbon sequestered annually by UK peatlands. This indicated that even small events of this nature can release significant quantities of carbon.

The Glasgow team said that current emission estimates, for example in the UK, do not take into account those from peatlands. The large number of wildfires in spring 2011 also only adds to their increasing concern about potential feedbacks between climate, fire frequency, fire severity and carbon fluxes from peatlands.

Matt Davies, of Glasgow University, said: "Direct estimates of the loss of carbon due to smouldering wildfires are needed to inform global estimates of the effect of wildfire on carbon dynamics and to aid with national emissions accounting. Smouldering peat fires are difficult to detect due to their low temperature and low heat release and the fact that tree canopies remain intact for months afterwards. Our case study is the first of its kind in the UK and shows that even small areas of peat fires can release significant levels of carbon into the atmosphere. If similar smouldering fires are under-reported in other temperate, forest and tropical peatland regions then emissions from peatland burning may well be a substantially greater issue than currently assumed."

The study also provided circumstantial evidence that afforestation of peatland soils, and associated site preparation, may contribute to an increased risk of peat fires.

**SEPA COMPLIANCE**

The Sunday Herald reported that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has named 267 waste dumps, recycling plants, fishfarms, sewage works and other facilities for breaching rules governing pollution.

SEPA'S new compliance assessments of 3,839 industrial sites rated 47 industrial sites as 'very poor' and 220 as 'poor' for 2012. In 2011, 46 sites were very poor and 170 were poor. The proportion of sites assessed as 'excellent', 'good' or 'broadly compliant' in 2012 was slightly better than 2011.

The biggest pollution problems were found in the waste industry, with over 100 processing, recycling and landfill sites named as polluters.

 **ENERGY**

**RENEWABLES TARGETS**

The Herald reported that an Audit Scotland report said that Scotland is making steady progress towards meeting its renewable energy targets for

2020, but achieving them will be 'challenging.' In 2012, the renewable share of electricity demand stood at 39.2%, heat at 4.1% and transport at 3.2%. On top of the 2020 electricity target, there is an 11% target for renewable heat demand and 10% for renewable transport.

The Audit Scotland report said that average annual increases in installed capacity would need to double in order to reach the 2020 target. Murdo Fraser MSP said: "The timescale is already slipping. There are hundreds of windfarm applications which have been handed approval but yet to be built, and hundreds more in the application stage. Huge swathes of these are going to have to be pushed through if this ludicrous goal is to be reached."

Alison Campbell, of Bidwells, said that there were two barriers to a mini-investment boom: access to grid connection and the planning process itself, with a need for clarity around the planning status for wild land.

Helen McDade, of JMT, said: "The problem is not the planning process, but developers submitting planning applications when SNH has made it clear they are unacceptable."

**WINDFARM STRIKE PRICE**

The BBC News website reported that the UK energy secretary, Ed Davey, has announced a strike price of £115 MWh for onshore windfarm projects in Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles [Jun 13]. £100 MWh is proposed for the UK mainland in 2014-15. This is the first time that the UK government has announced a different strike price for a particular area of the UK, which it said reflected the unique circumstances and potential of the Scottish islands. The cost of connecting to mainland markets has held back development on the islands in the past.

If the market price for energy is below the level of the strike price, a subsidy system kicks in to ensure the producer has a minimum level of income. However, the strike price only applies to onshore wind developments and will not impact on the marine energy industry.

Niall Stuart of Scottish Renewables said: "While the move does not reduce the cost of connecting to the grid for projects in the Scottish islands, which we understand to be six or seven times higher than charges on the mainland, it does at least help new onshore wind developers mitigate against these high costs."

The West Highland Free Press reported that Angus Campbell of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar said that the strike price pledge would change little unless the undersea cable issue was resolved, and that the strike price itself was not high enough.

**WINDFARM UPDATES**

**Borders:** The Scottish Government has turned down an appeal by E.ON for a windfarm at Corsbie Moor near Westruther [Mar 13]. The project had been reduced to 9 turbines from 21. The reporter concluded that the scheme would have had an unacceptable detrimental landscape impact and highlighted the cumulative impact when taken together with other windfarm sites.

**Caithness:** A privately-owned wind turbine on Scrabster Hill lost a blade which landed near the A836. A gust of wind, at around 40 mph, was responsible for the damage.

Highland Council turned off turbines at 16 schools in 2012 following concerns that they might be sited dangerously close to pupils. After a comprehensive risk assessment was completed, 13 have been turned back on with the remaining three deemed 'inefficient.' Since then, none have operated in wind speeds over 100 mph, although they are considered to be safe up to 134 mph.

• ScottishPower Renewables has obtained approval for 15 turbines at Halsary Forest windfarm at Watten, near Spittal. RWE already has 21 turbines in the nearby Causeymire development, with another five applied for. A third application by RWE in the same area for 13 turbines, at Bad a Cheo, was refused by Highland Council. There was concern on the impact on a local peat extraction firm and a war memorial. RWE is expected to appeal to the Scottish Government.

Highland Council debated the question of whether it is better to form a cluster of windfarms in one area to protect the rest of the rural landscape, or spread them out.

Whirlwind Renewables' application for the five turbine Achlachan Wind Farm, at West of Mybster farm near Spittal, was deferred.

Stuart Young, of the Caithness Windfarm Information Forum, said "In Caithness we now have 94 turbines operational or just about to be so. There are 54 more approved but not yet constructed. Another 43 submitted in planning applications, but not yet determined, and between 174 and 188 in scoping (being prepared for planning applications). But, as a result of today, the turbines will be less than a mile of the nearest house and less than two from Spittal."

He said that the planning meeting had highlighted the major weakness of the planning process in dealing with the applications on a first come, first served basis, rather than looking at the overall cumulative impact. He said: "These three applications should have been considered together and the impact on people should have been at the top of the list."

**Dumfries & Galloway:** E.ON is planning a 50 turbine windfarm near Loch Urr, between Moniaive and Corsock. Save Loch Urr (SLU) says that the windfarm will cover almost 6,000 acres of unspoilt countryside damaging the community, wildlife, the beauty of the area and the local economy, including tourism.

23 turbines have already been approved at the adjacent Blackcraig windfarm.

Caroline Pridham, of SLU, said: "Within a ten mile radius of the loch, nine industrial scale windfarms are being proposed by seven different windfarm developers, with a total of more than 200 giant turbines. Many of the proposed sites are adjacent to each other, which will result in a 'sea of turbines'."

• 2020 Renewables was refused planning permission for the 11 turbine Loch Hill windfarm, near of St John's Town of Dalry, due to its 'visual and cumulative impact on the surrounding area.' The plans had been recommended for approval by planning officials.

• The Galloway News reported that Russell Brown MP accused energy minister, Fergus Ewing, of ignoring local concerns about the cumulative impact of windfarms in the region. Mr Ewing gave a speech locally about community windfarm benefit funds; Mr Brown said that he was clearly only interested in one side of the argument.

• The Astronomer Royal for Scotland, the JMT and the Scottish Wild Land Group have written to the Scottish Government, asking it to rule out windfarms in the vicinity of Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park. The park should be given protection similar to that afforded to areas of wild land, and the organisations have called upon the Scottish Government to update planning policy to rule out the construction of windfarms around the park.

There have been nine proposals near the Scottish Dark Sky Observatory [Jan 13]. Ministry of Defence and Aviation Authority safety requirements mean that wind turbines must be illuminated which would affect both the ability of

astronomers to use sensitive equipment, and the visibility of stars, galaxies, comets and Northern Lights.

**East Renfrewshire:** The Scottish Government has refused planning consent for the Harelaw Renewable Energy Park proposed windfarm at Glenouther Moor, also within East Ayrshire. Following a public local inquiry, it was found that Gamesa Energy UK Ltd's windfarm would appear out of scale with the surrounding landscape and that it would have significant adverse landscape and visual impacts.

**Easter Ross:** *The Herald* reported that the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS) has objected to a further windfarm development on Ben Wyvis [Jul 12]. MCofS said that the Carn Gorm windfarm, with up to 19 turbines, is on the southern slopes of the massif, north west of Dingwall. The MCofS said that it is astonished that a developer could even consider siting a windfarm there.

Simon Morton, of PI Renewables Ltd, said: "Our project is not on the Ben Wyvis massif [it is to the west of it]. We were very mindful of the previous plan, which had threatened iconic views."

**Shetland:** The *BBC News* website reported that a judicial review found that the Scottish Government failed to take proper account of its obligations under European nature legislation when it gave permission for the 103 turbine, 370 MW Viking windfarm [Jan 13]. The protest group, Sustainable Shetland, launched the legal review, also claiming that the development is too big and would blight the landscape.

Lady Clark of Calton said she was not satisfied that Scottish ministers had 'meaningfully engaged' with their obligations' under the Wild Birds Directive 2009. She said: "This case involves a very large, multimillion pound development with important consequences. It is plain that this is a case in which it appears not to be disputed by anyone that whimbrel are a declining species in the UK with approximately 95% of 290 breeding pairs in Shetland. I am in no doubt that the complete failure of the respondents in the decision letter to address explicitly legal issues arising out of the Wild Birds Directive 2009 and explain their approach to the decision making in the case has caused great difficulty in understanding and dealing with their decision."

The Scottish Government said that in its decision letter concerning the scheme it had careful regard to the potential impact on the environment, particularly wild birds. It noted that Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) took the view that a reduction in the scale of the proposed development was still likely to result in a significant impact on the conservation status of the UK whimbrel population.

**PENTLAND FIRTH**

The *BBC News* website reported that the Scottish Government has granted permission to MayGen to build a 86 MW tidal array in the Inner Sound of the Pentland Firth, between Stroma and the Scottish mainland. It will begin with a 9 MW demonstration project of up to six turbines; phase one of the plan would see 86 turbines deployed, with MeyGen hoping a second phase would eventually see up to 400 submerged turbines at the site. It will be the first commercial deployment of tidal turbines in Scottish waters, and the largest development in Europe.

**ISLAY TIDAL ENERGY**

DP Energy has lodged an application for a tidal energy development about five miles off Islay, close to Portnahaven. Some residents are concerned

some of the tidal turbines will be 'surface piercing' and impact on sea views. There are also fears that commercial fishermen may be excluded from a vast area of sea as the development progresses. Between 15 and 30 turbines are proposed, with a number rising 20 metres above sea level; the first stage of the proposal is for 30 MW capacity.

**MUCK WAVE ENERGY**

Marine Harvest Scotland has applied for permission to site a prototype wave energy device at its new fishfarm site near the Isle of Muck.

**CAIRNGORMS HYDRO**

The Cairngorms National Park Authority has given the go-ahead for two small hydro schemes at Glen Prosen in Angus and Glenferate in Perthshire.

**OPENCAST COAL**

The *BBC News* website reported that Hargreaves Mining Services has applied to Dumfries & Galloway Council for a change in operating conditions at the Glenmuckloch opencast site, on the Dumfriesshire and Ayrshire border north of Kirkconnel [Jul 13]. An eight mile (13 km) conveyor belt was opened in 2007 to take coal from the site to a railhead in New Cumnock. The developers are now looking at alternative options and have applied to be allowed to remove coal by local roads.

- The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Government and local authorities went to the Court of Session to appeal a decision ruling that the liquidators of Scottish Coal could abandon coal mines and polluted land without carrying out restoration or controlling pollution from the sites [Jul 13]. The decision means that priority would be given to passing any remaining funds to creditors. Many of the sites are important for wildlife. Environmental groups fear that clean up costs fall to the taxpayer, and in some instances adequate cleanup is unlikely ever to happen. Financial bonds intended to pay for restoration may be almost worthless.

Aedàn Smith, of RSPB Scotland, said: "It is a fundamental principle of European and Scottish law that the polluter should pay – that means private companies must pay up for the damage they cause to the environment. Going bankrupt must not be a route for environmental vandals to escape justice. It is also vitally important that we find out exactly why the restoration bonds have failed catastrophically when called on to perform the very role they exist for."

- The Scottish Government announced that it will consult on more effective regulation of the coal industry. The energy minister, Fergus Ewing, said: "The Scottish Open Cast Mining Taskforce has heard lots of evidence about what works well in the field of opencast restoration, and since last October a Restoration Bonds Working Group has been examining the finer details. It is clear that every site is different. Compliance monitoring, enforcement and financial assurance systems are all in place, but they need to be made to work more effectively, tailored to each site."

Patrick Harvie MSP said that East Ayrshire Council had doubled its estimate of the funds needed to restore the area's mines from £62m to £133m. He said: "Decades of opencast coal mining has caused serious environmental damage across Scotland. Former and current mining communities are being locked out of the debate on this crisis; they face being abandoned by an industry failing to honour its moral and legal obligations. The market for coal is declining and Scotland's future is clearly in renewables, so it is worrying that ministers still think coal has a role to play."

*The Herald* reported that the Liberal Democrat and Green parties have called for a public inquiry into the restoration of mines, which they say have left local communities 'environmentally bankrupt.' They also want an immediate halt to any new developments to ensure that the industry fulfils its 'legal and moral obligation' by paying the costs of restoration. Willie Rennie MSP said that the government was 'propping up failing mines' risking further environmental damage to compound the damage communities have already been exposed to.

**HEAT FROM WASTE**

Planning approval is being sought by New Earth Solutions from Scottish Borders Council for a plant at Easter Langlee, near Galashiels, which would turn municipal waste into electricity on site.



**TOURISM & RECREATION**

**LOCH LEVEN HERITAGE TRAIL**

A 21 km all-abilities heritage trail around Loch Leven National Nature Reserve in Kinross-shire is to be completed [Jul 12]. The final 6.5 km section will close the gap between Vane Farm and Lochleven Mills, after negotiations with landowners, and will open next spring. Funding has come from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with further contributions from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Arthur & Margaret Thompson Trust, the Gannochy Trust, Sustrans and private donors.

**RECREATION SURVEY**

SNH has published the *2012 Annual Report for The Scottish Recreation Survey*. It is the tenth, and final, report in the series. It shows that 79% of adults living in Scotland visited the outdoors for recreation in 2012, taking an estimated 297 million visits. 42% of people visited at least once a week.

The Scottish Recreation Survey has now been replaced by the Scotland's People & Nature Survey; results will be available from mid-2014.

See: [www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2052](http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2052); [www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2051](http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2051)



**NEWS OF ORGANISATIONS**

**CROFTERS COMMISSION**

*The Herald* reported that Donnie Ross, a crofter elected to the Crofters Commission last year, has resigned. He cited Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH) designation of croft land for environmental protection as a reason for his resignation, saying that the Commission is more interested in helping environmental bodies than crofters; SNH was being allowed to put designations on 64% of townships' hill grazings.

**CSGN**

The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN), is a 40 year project to transform the environment of the area for people, the economy and nature. Following a review, the Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT), which currently provides support to the project, will become the CSGN Trust. Lead responsibility for the initiative within government will transfer to Natural Resources Division within the Scottish Government. Previously, Forestry Commission Scotland and SNH were responsible jointly for the CSGN and CSFT has hosted a small team responsible for coordinating the project.

See: [www.centuralscotlandgreennetwork.org](http://www.centuralscotlandgreennetwork.org)