

AUTUMN 2010

# Wild Land News

Magazine of the Scottish Wild Land Group

Protecting wilderness in Europe

Europe's most  
UNDISTURBED PLACES

What makes wild land WILD?



## The European Commission perspective on WILD LAND

"(...) guiding principle must be taken from the Habitats Directive that obliges for the Member States to protect biodiversity by maintaining or restoring the specific structures and functions of the Habitats of Community Interest. This considers also the typical species of these habitats."



# Autumn 2010

## **WILD LAND NEWS**

**Autumn 2010, Issue 77**

Magazine of the  
Scottish Wild Land Group

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perspective on WILD LAND

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What makes WILD LAND wild?

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Wilderness in Europe is  
sprinkled all over the  
continent. Smaller or larger  
fragments can be found in  
literally every corner of Europe

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Rob Mc Morran

## Comment from Rob, SWLG Co-ordinator

Welcome to WLN 77! SWLG recently held their AGM in Bridge of Allan and we have provided a summary of the 2010 activities report (from the AGM) in this edition for your interest. The AGM was a resounding success, with a further growth in new members apparent, an increase in the number of volunteers and a whole host of new ideas for SWLG to bring forward for 2011! The AGM Minutes are available on the SWLG website: [www.swlg.org.uk](http://www.swlg.org.uk)

We often tend to think of Scotland's wild land and wild places in isolation, rarely considering these areas in the wider scheme of things. Edition 77 of Wild Land News attempts to do just that, with two of the articles exploring the European context for wild land. In the first of these Edit Borza and Zoltan Kun have provided us with a detailed overview of the European-wide Pan Parks wilderness initiative. It is important to point out that Scotland's wild land does not generally equate with the American (or even wider European) ideal of wilderness, as pristine natural areas; however, major parallels are evident, particularly in relation to

the large-scale semi-natural habitat areas prevalent in Scotland, many of which offer considerable scope for restoration, or 're-wilding' as discussed in previous editions of WLN. Wilderness occurs at different levels or scales and many of the wildest areas of Scotland deliver similar ecosystem services and biodiversity benefits to those which have been designated as Pan Parks across Europe. As Edit points out, Europe is a heavily industrialised zone, yet major opportunities continue to exist for the preservation and expansion of wild areas and Pan Parks is leading the way in this regard, through delivering on both conservation and tourism related socio-economic objectives. A clear opportunity is presented here – should we have a Scottish Pan Park? Can such a concept work in Scotland? Do you want a Pan Park in your area? To find out more visit the Pan Parks website or contact the authors directly (see the article for details).

Olli Ojala further enlightens us as to where the EU stands on wild land and wilderness, making the key point that much of the conservation

movement has its roots in wilderness conservation – something we should always bear in mind when fighting our corner in Scotland. The Natura 2000 network of designations may well contain much of Europe's wildest areas – although any comprehensive approach to protecting Europe's wild areas will need to go beyond Natura - with much of Scotland's wild land (for example) falling outside of this network. Critically though, Scotland is not alone in Europe in seeking to conserve wild land and while the degree of current or past management varies widely across Europe's most natural sites, we are essentially talking about very similar issues and landscapes. As Olli points out, the drive for policy relating to wild areas has emerged from wider society and it is up to all of us, to make sure we are heard and to put our case for wild land conservation forward, at both the national and European levels.

These articles link well with a very comprehensive overview of recent research which has been carried out on Scotland's wild land by Steve Carver and others at the Wildland Research Institute and further afield. Momentum is very definitely building, with Scotland's national park's leading the way in mapping wildness and developing a coherent approach to protecting wild land. As the articles authors note, Scottish Natural Heritage has also begun the process of definitively mapping wildness across the whole of

Scotland, with the Scottish Government also having commissioned a review on how these areas are being managed across Europe. There has never been a time of greater research activity around this topic in Scotland and it remains to be seen how the findings of all of this work are to be brought into play – what will it all mean for Scotland's wild land?

Dennis Smith also provides us with an eloquent response to George Charles' very interesting article from WLN 76, exploring the cultural facets of wild land and what people are really looking for when we enter 'the wild'. Exploring wild areas, to my mind, is often something of a transformative experience, where we can really begin to feel 'connected' with our wider environment. This sense of connection is touched on again by Tommy McManmon in his piece for the 'My Wild land slot. Tommy again queries the significance of cultural elements of Scottish landscapes and what they mean for our ideas of what is really wild, with his experiences often enhanced by ruined houses lending a 'sense of scale' to his favourite landscapes.

However you might experience Scotland's wild land, it certainly seems key that we embrace its different elements – including cultural aspects – and that we consider our place at the European and even global scale. We hope you enjoy this edition of the mag and as ever, if you have any comments,

Rob Mc Morran

## What have we done in 2010?

Coordinators report from 2010 SWLG AGM 2009-2010

Main activities and achievements during the year

The Group continues to monitor various issues that affect wild land in Scotland, including on-shore renewable energy installations, access issues, landscape matters and policy and legislative developments. We continue to lobby for a major review of the policy system that promotes such industrialisation of remote wild areas. As part of this process **the SWLG led the development of a major conference on wild land during late 2009/early 2010, which was held at SNH Battleby in May of this year.** This was the first major conference on wild land in Scotland since 2004 and represented a genuinely collaborative effort, with support from a diverse range of partners, including UNESCO Scotland, the Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College UHI, Leeds University (Wildland Research Institute), Lochaber College UHI, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Cairngorms National Park Authority, The John Muir Trust and the Scottish Mountaineering Trust. As an additional element of the

conference and to further the development of awareness and knowledge about wild land in Scotland the SWLG is currently **exploring the possibility of (and funding options for) producing a revised version of the SWLG 2001 publication: Wild land what future?**

This conference represents an important component of a wider building of momentum on wild land and wild land policy development – including work in this area by Scotland’s National Parks and Scottish Natural Heritage. The SWLG intends to remain an important part of this policy process in 2011.

**Three editions of Wild Land News, the magazine of the SWLG, were published since March 2009 (Editions 74, 75 and 76).** During this phase of magazine publications **the magazine was redesigned and extended**, with the redesign being led by Ania Kociolek a new SWLG volunteer. The magazine has grown in size and articles are now relatively broad ranging in scope, focusing on important issues and developments



relating to wild land as before, but also including a more personalised element within articles and a stronger focus on ecological issues and specifically the concept of rewilding and how it relates to Scotland. Specific articles of note (many of which have been authored by committee members) have included two detailed reviews of rewilding in Scotland, an update on progress at the Carrifran wildwood site, a review of hilltracks and relevant legislation in Scotland, a number of articles on wind farm developments and a review of the proceedings of the 2010 wild land conference.

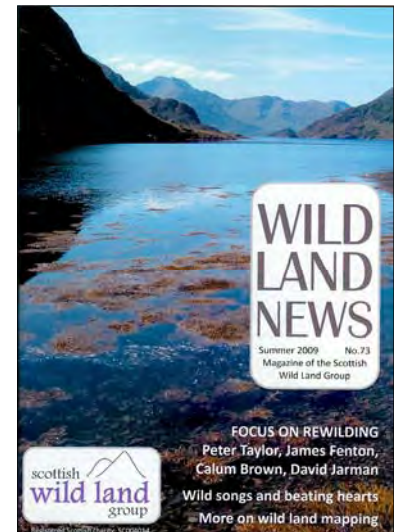
**The SWLG website, which was redesigned and updated in 2009, has also been continually updated and improved during 2009-2010.** As a further element of increasing awareness and membership of the SWLG the committee designed and developed a leaflet on the SWLG, which is currently being distributed by SWLG volunteers in appropriate areas across Scotland. In an effort to embrace the benefits of modern technology the SWLG is now also active on Facebook and Twitter! The SWLG Facebook group currently has 149 members (which is always slowly growing) and SWLG has 175 followers on Twitter. A members emailing list has also been compiled for email updates.

A number of new members have joined the group and **a core group of (non-committee member)**

**volunteers has been established.**

These volunteers are being used to assist with magazine and leaflet distribution, as well as assisting with magazine articles and leaflet design.

**The group has also continued to be represented at LINK Landscape Task Force Meetings, with Rob McMorran now the main SWLG representative within LINK and Calum Brown acting as a supporting LINK representative.** As part of this process the SWLG has supported the MCoS campaign on hill tracks in Scotland. This work has included the SWLG being involved in an NGO consultation group on hill tracks for the Cairngorms National Park.



Three editions of Wild Land News, the magazine of the SWLG, were published since March 2009 (Editions 74, 75 and 76). During this phase of magazine publications the magazine was redesigned and extended



Olli Olaja

## PROTECTING WILDERNESS AND WILD LAND IN EU: A perspective from the European Commission

**Olli Ojala** works as policy officer in the Natura 2000 unit of the European Commissions Directorate General Environment. He has a Masters degree in Biology, major in botany, from University of Helsinki, Finland. In 2001 he started working in the Regional Environment Centre of Uusimaa in Finland. Since 2009, he has been seconded as a national expert to the European Commission. Over the years he has dealt with various aspects of nature conservation e.g. nature inventories, species and biotope protection, habitat restoration, management of Natura 2000 sites and most recently policy development.

In the wide field of nature conservation the different aspects of the protection of wilderness and wild lands have gained increasing attention in recent years. The main credit for this renaissance of wilderness and wild lands protection belongs to the civil society. It has kept the discussion alive, developed arguments and pushed the issue determinately to the political agenda. This movement can be referred to as a renaissance because this very issue inspired the first calls for nature conservation in many countries and led to the designation and protection of nationally important natural landscapes and other areas representing the nature considered as most valuable and representative. These areas were often relatively large and were frequently, whether deliberately or not, composed of entire functional ecosystems.

Despite the long history and virtual simplicity of the common pursuit of wilderness protection, one does not

have to talk about protection of wilderness with many before it becomes obvious that there is a wide variety of different interpretations and perceptions of wilderness; often very understandably varying according to the origin of the speaker. Some even say that real wilderness does not exist in Europe! However, that is easy to counter as one just has to take a look at the astonishing pictures taken during the 'Wild Wonders of Europe' campaign ([www.wild-wonders.com](http://www.wild-wonders.com)) to understand the contrary to be true.

Not only the definition but also the arguments used vary from protection of biodiversity and specific species to social benefits provided by wild areas. For example, some campaigns concentrate on the protection of saproxylic beetles and argue for conservation of forests where the temporal continuum of micro habitats - deadwood of certain diameter and decaying phase - has not been interrupted.

Some other initiatives view the strongest arguments for the protection of wild areas as being related to their importance for youth rehabilitation and other therapeutic interventions.

The diversity of definitions itself might not necessarily constitute a problem, except when we try to work for the protection of wilderness or wild areas, when the lack of solid definition can sometimes constitute a major problem. "Why should we risk wasting our time and scarce resources protecting something indefinable when there are more concrete objectives to choose?", someone could ask. It is hard to

claim that this question would be unjustified.

A brief look at approaches to wilderness protection and the objectives of 'wilderness and wild lands enthusiasts' in Europe would actually not be very assuring either. Some are working to protect the last remnants of untouched nature in their corner of Europe, while others have a relative wealth of wilderness areas remaining and are fighting for the correct management of these areas. These approaches contrast with those of the most populated parts of Europe, where the focus is often on the restoration of nature or in preventing the intrusion of infrastructure to new areas.

Humans have interfered with ecosystems, depend on them and exploit them to different degrees in different parts of Europe; the relationship between humans and nature also differs widely according to local tradition, source of livelihoods, education, population density and legislation



Photo: Andy Gibb

However, amazingly, these different actors and approaches have found their way to the same conference rooms, like in the 'Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat' in Prague 2009 and a multitude of other smaller conferences across Europe.

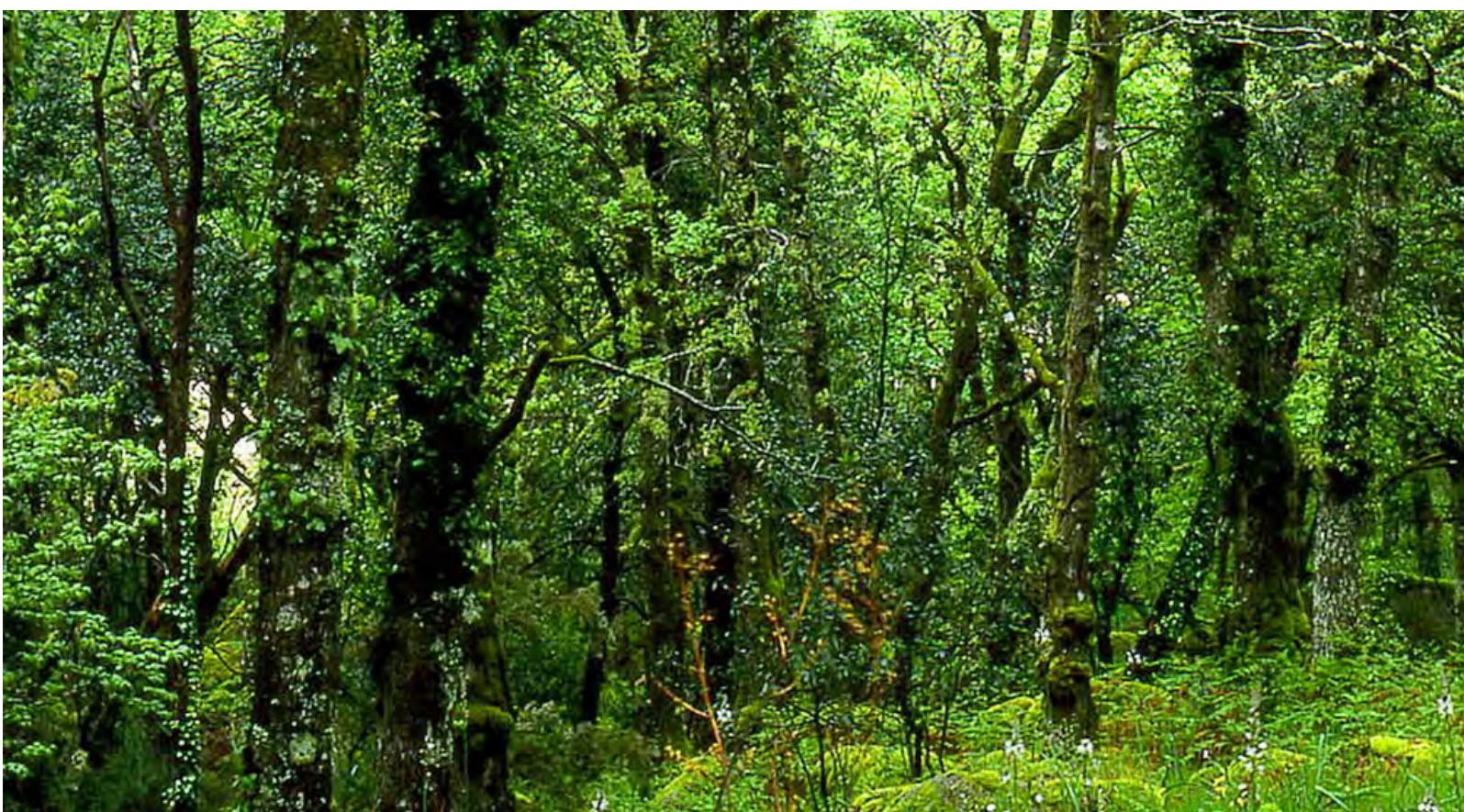
This might not be such a miracle after all, as despite apparent disparities, all of these actors do seem to be pursuing similar goals. The lowest common denominator for this direction could be defined as 'moving towards healthy and resilient ecosystems' - as the EU jargon would name it. Just the environment, in the wide sense, where the different actors operate is different. Humans have interfered with ecosystems, depend on them and exploit them to different degrees in different parts of Europe; the relationship between humans and nature also differs widely according to local tradition, source

of livelihoods, education, population density and legislation.

This is also where the European Commission sees its role and why it is producing guidelines for the management of wilderness and wild lands in Natura 2000 – to be finalised by the end of 2011. This guidelines document is meant to guide proper management of areas where non-intervention or set aside is chosen as the management method. It also aims to correct existing misunderstandings and prevent new problems. For this work the guiding principle must be taken from the Habitats Directive that obliges for the Member States to protect biodiversity by maintaining or restoring the specific structures and functions of the Habitats of Community Interest. This considers also the typical species of these habitats.

Such a guidelines document – even limited to Natura 2000 which is the

According to preliminary analysis, 99% of protected wilderness in the EU is situated within the borders of Natura 2000 sites.



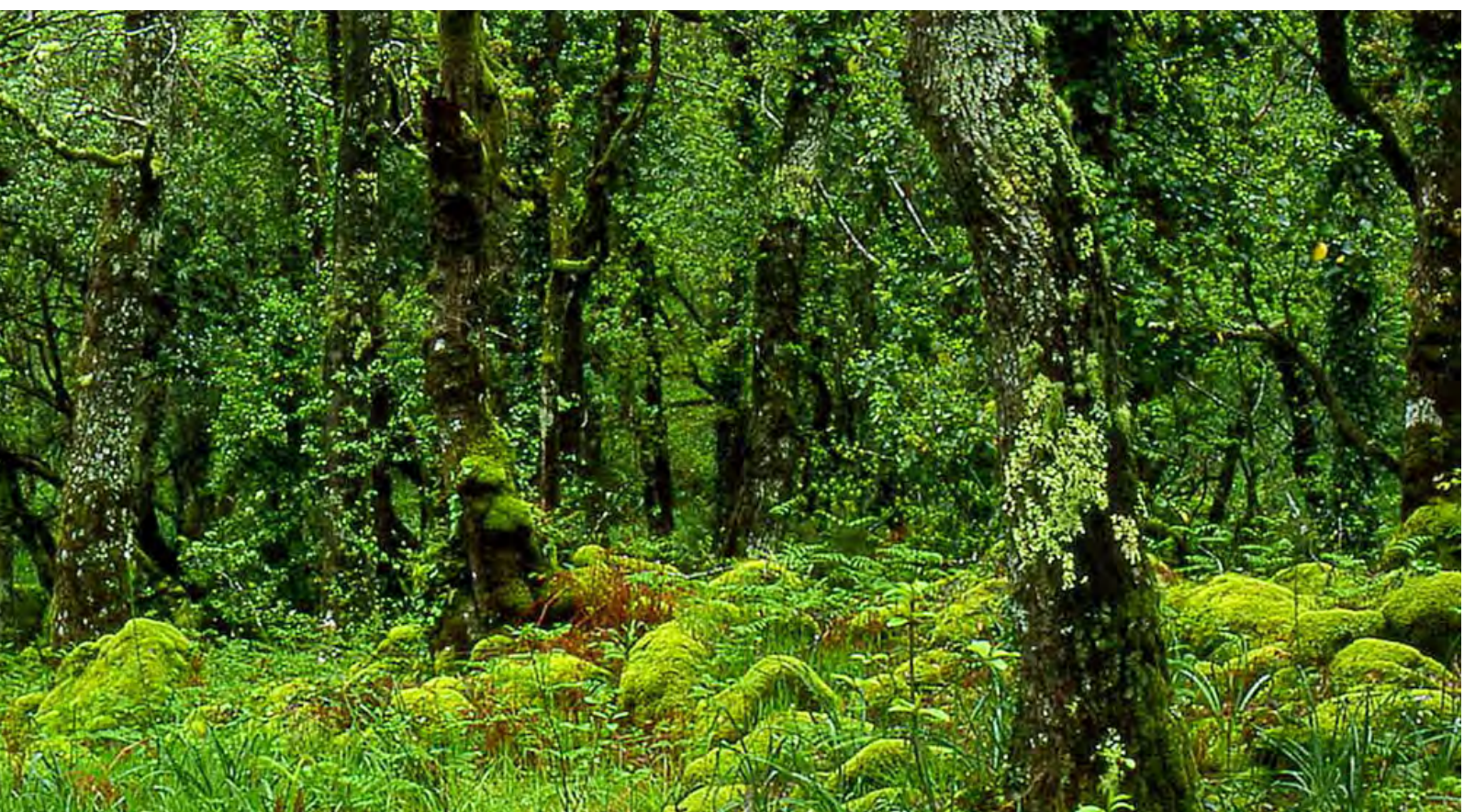
hard core of the competence of the European Commission's environmental policy – represents a potentially important tool for the protection of biodiversity in the EU. According to preliminary analysis, 99% of protected wilderness in the EU is situated within the borders of Natura 2000 sites. Obviously, due to the problems related to the definition of wilderness this figure will not be definitive and it will change as the knowledge accumulates. However, there are good reasons to believe - and a lot of serious work has been done in this area - that the most valuable parts of European nature - therefore, most parts of the wilderness and wild areas as well - are found within the Natura 2000 network.

As an example, the management of these areas plays a crucial role for many species and can contribute to the survival among others of, for

example, saproxylic beetles which according to the European Red List of saproxylic beetles, published by the IUCN, are threatened by habitat loss due to logging and wood harvesting, lack of veteran trees and sanitation logging. Consequently, 14 % of them are considered threatened and a further 14 % near threatened in the EU.

The European Commission continues to be active on the issue of the protection of wilderness and wild lands. It recognises the importance of healthy and resilient ecosystems in protection of biodiversity and achieving the ambitious biodiversity targets by 2020 as well as in fighting climate change; but it is limited by its competencies. Civil society, together with the research community, does priceless work in formulating political demands, creating action and feeding in new information to support decision making.

Photo: PAN Parks





Edit Borza

## Exploring Europe's most undisturbed areas of nature

### The nature of wilderness in PAN Parks

Edit Borza is the communications Manager for Pan Parks and is responsible for the newsletter, publications and press activity of the Foundation. Edit first worked in conservation related communications projects with WWF and was happy to join PAN Parks, an innovative project to combine conservation, working with local communities and tourism. Now she continues her work to raise public awareness of PAN Parks and its conservation work, preserving Europe's wilderness.

A small but growing number of people, value Europe's natural heritage as much as its cultural heritage. Wilderness however, has been somewhat missing from the image of Europe. The vision of wilderness is a concept that reaches deep into the heart and emotions of most people. It is well known throughout the globe, but most Europeans do not know that they can still find exceptional remnants of wilderness on their own continent. PAN Parks represent these places. In PAN Parks Wilderness vast amounts of nature exists in its purest form without human interference.

#### **WHERE IS WILDERNESS IN EUROPE?**

Wilderness in Europe is sprinkled all over the continent. Smaller or larger fragments can be found in literally every corner of Europe. Wilderness in Europe is therefore sometimes more, sometimes less visible. The challenge is to identify these fragments and recognise wilderness e.g. inside existing protected areas. Many relatively large fragments of wilderness are still hidden in existing protected areas, small patches of wilderness exist all over in the form of strictly protected areas or nature reserves. Wilderness can still be found in forests but also along rivers and marshlands, in high mountains

or on the coastline. There is also underground wilderness (caves) or underwater (marine) wilderness.

However, compact, un-fragmented and well-managed wilderness areas are very scarce in Europe. Furthermore, the general public, politicians and even some conservation managers often do not consider protection of European wilderness as a priority. This is one of the reasons why we are losing, on a daily basis, the last fragments of our European wilderness heritage. The last fragments of natural forests are penetrated by sanitary logging

operations, remote corners of mountains echo with the roar of tractors and bulldozers and more and more new roads penetrate and crisscross the last undisturbed valleys of Europe's mountains.

As well as existing wilderness areas, there is also unlimited potential for European wilderness in well-designed restoration projects - this statement being based on the belief that wilderness can be restored. This restoration requires a clear strategy and objectives, clear ideas and smart decisions. The wilderness restoration concept is crucial in the context of large-scale (landscape) restoration projects where it plays an essential role in protecting crucial habitats for many keystone species.

The belief of the inevitability of active management measures in every corner of the European continent is deeply etched in the mind of Europeans and nature resource managers. Chainsaw, axe or bulldozer are still considered as the main management tools, even in protected areas, with relatively few exceptions. To protect the remnants of European wilderness requires, first of all changes in the minds of people - this is very much true also in the case of nature conservation managers. The first step is to find a way to teach people that they should not be afraid of having and enjoying European wilderness. They shouldn't see wilderness as a threat but as a unique opportunity and also as a marketing advantage.

## **WHY DO WE HAVE TO PROTECT EUROPEAN WILDERNESS?**

Wilderness areas need to be protected for many ecological reasons as they are core areas for nature being

- refuge for many endangered species
- home of many species that are still waiting to be discovered
- places with highly adapted fauna and flora, which would be lost forever if these areas disappeared
- reference laboratories where natural processes of evolution still continue

Moreover, if left intact, wilderness areas offer stronger sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits – for local communities, landholders and society in general. Such benefits include

- addressing climate change through carbon sequestration and flood mitigation
- fast-growing nature-based tourism opportunities of relevance to the rural development agenda
- potential to help tackle important city issues such as youth development and healthcare

Wilderness areas also provide spiritual benefits being places of inspiration, renewal or recreation far from the bustle and pressure of modern life.

“The belief of the inevitability of active management measures in every corner of the European continent is deeply etched in the mind of Europeans and nature resource managers.”



Photo: PAN Parks



## WHAT IS PAN PARKS WILDERNESS?

From a conservation perspective, the PAN Parks Foundation occupies a unique niche in terms of its attempt to redefine and develop a concept of wilderness conservation in Europe, one of the most highly developed areas in the world. The concept of PAN Parks Wilderness is based on the IUCN definition (category Ib) but adopted to the European context and the Foundation's goal to protect Europe's wilderness. In order to promote the concept of wilderness and provide best practice examples, the Foundation creates a network of the large well-managed protected areas with wilderness areas also providing a unique experience for visitors.

To qualify as a PAN Park, a protected area has to be at least 20,000 hectares in size with a core-wilderness area of 10,000 hectares. PAN Parks Wilderness is defined as an ecologically unfragmented area of land of at least 10,000 hectares where no extractive use is permitted and where the only management intervention is that aimed at maintaining or restoring natural ecological processes and ecological integrity. No extractive uses are permitted within these areas, which means that activities such as hunting, culling, fishing, mining, logging, grazing, grass cutting, road and building construction are not accepted inside the wilderness area of a PAN Park. However, visitors have various opportunities to enjoy

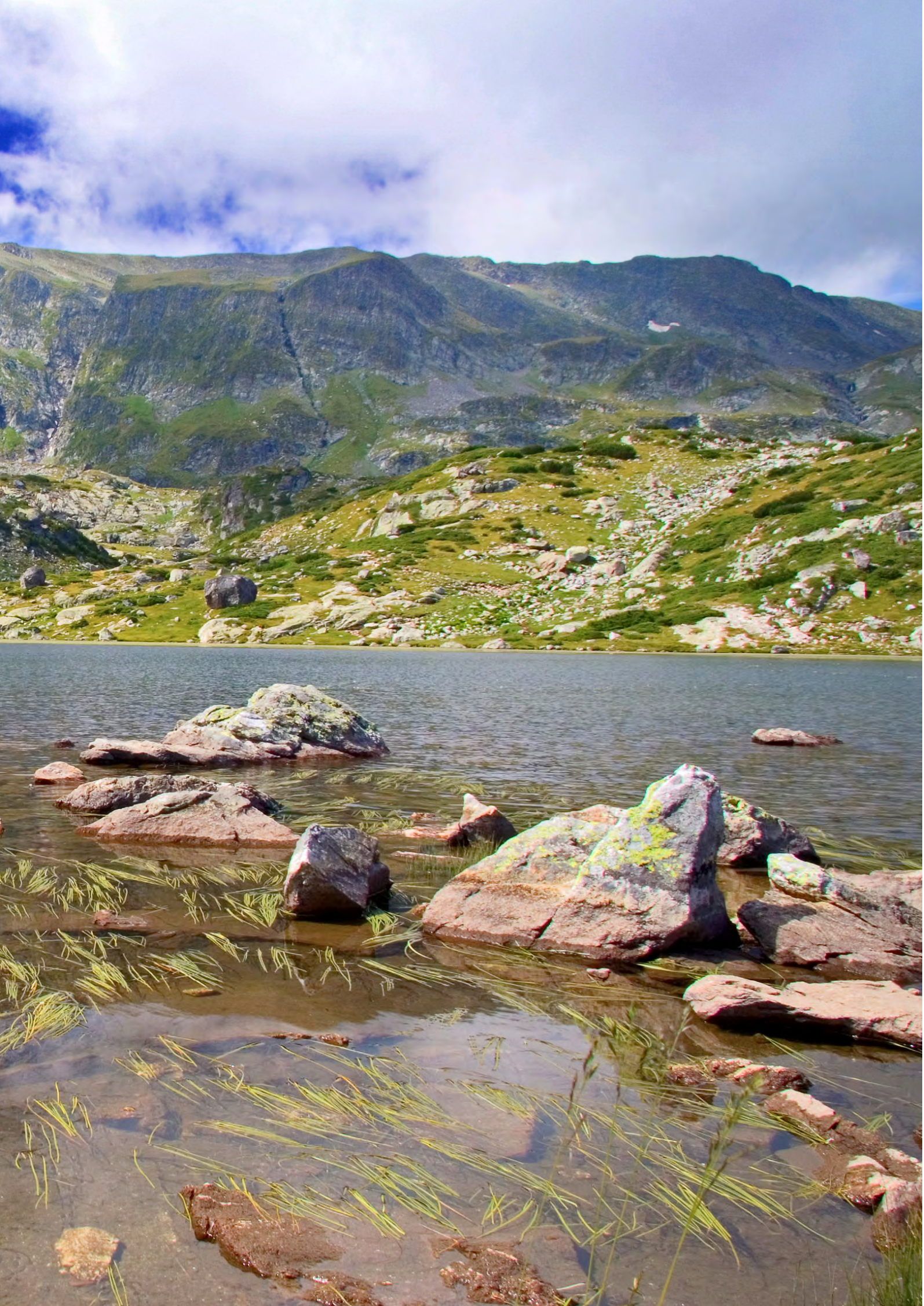
PAN Parks Wilderness, and many locations on the edges of PAN Parks wilderness areas offer stunning views, short walks, and visitors' facilities.

Land that has been partly logged, farmed, grazed, mined, or otherwise utilised for some time but without intensive development or significant alteration of the landscape may also be considered suitable for the PAN Parks Wilderness designation. However, at the time of PAN Parks evaluation, these activities should have been discontinued and the wilderness character of the land should be the dominant feature i.e. all land is left to natural dynamics and succession - or is being visibly restored through appropriate management actions.

The network of certified PAN Parks represents unique examples of wild European landscape and rich biodiversity. In Peneda-Gerês NP, Portugal, the PAN Parks Wilderness includes the last remnants of native forests in country; PAN Parks Wilderness in Rila NP, Bulgaria or Majella NP, Italy provide unique examples of forest ecosystems without any extractive uses; PAN Parks Wilderness in Archipelago NP, Finland provides an exceptional example of a no fishing zone in the Baltic Sea.

From a conservation perspective, the PAN Parks Foundation occupies a unique niche in terms of its attempt to redefine and develop a concept of wilderness conservation in Europe, one of the most highly developed areas in the world.





the PAN Parks potential is rather limited in Scotland due to various reasons. One of the most important reasons is the fact that the PAN Parks standard does not accept hunting within the wilderness core zone.

## **WHAT DOES THE PAN PARKS FOUNDATION DO FOR EUROPEAN WILDERNESS?**

PAN Parks maximises its efforts by active work in the fields of policy, conservation, communications and tourism, which include the following activities:

### **Developing a network of wilderness protected areas in Europe**

These areas provide examples of the best practices in wilderness management, working with local communities and offering a unique experience to visitors in a sustainable way. PAN Parks also actively supports European protected area managers to meet the PAN Parks quality standards and link them to a European-wide network with opportunities to exchange expert ideas.

### **Setting an important benchmark for high standards in protected area management**

PAN Parks provides an effective third-party certification system under the WCPA (World Commission on Protected Areas) Framework for Management Effectiveness.

### **Redefining and developing a concept of wilderness conservation in Europe**

PAN Parks occupies a unique position from a conservation perspective in its attempt to redefine and develop a concept of wilderness conservation in Europe,

one of the most highly developed areas in the world.

### **Creating better policies and a research environment for wilderness areas**

The Foundation participates in developing guidelines to support techniques needed in wilderness protection and lobby for their adoption in the EU legal framework. PAN Parks prepares professional publications on these approaches to be applied in wilderness protection.

### **Creating and operating a 'Wilderness Think-tank'**

PAN Parks set up a panel of wilderness experts (conservationists and scientists) to support wilderness conservation in Europe.

### **Raising awareness and creating a positive perception of wilderness**

The Foundation works to provide extensive information on wilderness European-wide through media appearances, publications, our website and various communications tools such as leaflets plus info boards in the field, in PAN Parks.

### **Promoting the PAN Parks network as the best wilderness areas of Europe**

Publicity is provided for PAN Parks in European and local media, through leaflets, our website and various international and local events.

### **Helping develop these areas through the active promotion of**

Previous page: PAN Parks

### **local and sustainable tourism**

The Foundation actively promotes local and sustainable tourism in PAN Parks.

### **Developing a certification system for selecting local PAN Parks partners**

PAN Parks provide criteria not only for wilderness protected areas but also for tourism businesses in their region. They implement independent quality audits and provide technical support for monitoring. The PAN Parks brand enables tourists to be assured that they are really visiting the best of Europe's wilderness.

### **Linking local business partners with international tour operators**

Local business partners are promoted and linked to international tour operators to provide opportunity for potential partnerships.

### **The Scottish PAN Parks potential**

Scotland appears to be the only European country with a "wildness policy" statement. This policy states that the best way forward for the protection and management of wildness and wild land is through a number of complementary approaches, building on existing mechanisms, especially those which support landscape protection.

However, the PAN Parks potential is rather limited in Scotland due to various reasons. One of the most important reasons is the fact that the PAN Parks standard does not

accept hunting within the wilderness core zone. Deer culling is an important conservation, political and socio-economic issue in Scottish terrestrial protected areas. Culling, a management tool to control deer populations and enable restoration of native woodland, is more intensive in these areas than in areas designated for sport and recreational hunting. There are continuous disputes between pro- and anti-culling groups and this is a sensitive issue discussed all over the country. In order to cope with this problem, the reintroduction of natural predators - lynx, wolf, and bear - but also wild boar and beaver should be considered – again a topic leading to discussions that often become very emotional.

Despite the above mentioned challenges, Scotland has the best potential to have a certified PAN Park in the near future in the UK. There is huge re-wilding potential and also a marine or coastal protected area could be considered as a potential PAN Park.

For further information on PAN Parks:

Visit [www.panparks.org](http://www.panparks.org)  
contact Zoltan Kun, Executive Director, PAN Parks Foundation,  
[zkun@panparks.org](mailto:zkun@panparks.org)



Steve Carver, Steve Nutter and Mark Fisher  
Wildland Research Institute, University of Leeds

## Wild land research gathers momentum

Dr Steve Carver is a Geographer and Senior Lecturer at the University of Leeds and director of the Wildland Research Institute. He has over 20 years experience in the field of GIS, with special interests in wild land, landscape evaluation and public participation. He has worked extensively on the development of wild land mapping and evaluation methodologies and has tested and applied these across a variety of locations and spatial scales including Scotland, England, Britain, Europe and the USA.

There has been a lot of water under the bridge since we last wrote in the pages of WLN on the issue of mapping wild land in the Cairngorms, not least of which has been the launch of the Wildland Research Institute (WRI). This research group, based at the University of Leeds, specializes in research and policy development relating to wilderness and wild land and aims to address the research requirements, strategies and policies for a transition to a greater presence of wild landscapes and natural processes in the UK, Europe and the world (see: [www.wildlandresearch.org](http://www.wildlandresearch.org)). We have been progressing along this path in recent months through a series of mapping and policy review projects, many of which are ongoing and on which we are able to report here.

### **Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park**

Building on the earlier work for the Cairngorm National Park (See WLN No. 72, Spring 2009, pg 10-16), WRI and its partners are now developing a similar approach to mapping wilderness in the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The two parks are quite different in terms of their physical landscape and the nature of the human presence, so the mapping methods used are being adapted in ways that allow the uniqueness of both parks to be reflected at the same time as

maintaining a common structure that will allow the results to be directly comparable. For instance, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs contains much more open water in the form of lochs, reservoirs and inland coastal waters, such that the remoteness models have had to be modified to allow for the fact that water craft (kayaks, canoes and larger boats) are often used to gain access to islands and remote shorelines. Land use in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs is also more diverse and fragmented meaning more ground truthing of the land cover data has been required to

remove errors from misclassification. Results from this work are expected early in the New Year.

### **The southern extension**

Meanwhile, back in the Cairngorms, the government has extended the southern boundary of the park to include much of the Forest of Atholl, the Tarf and the Tilt, with the new boundary extending from Beinn Udlamain (1011m) and the Pass of Drumochter down to the A9 corridor to Killiecrankie over to the Spital of Glenshee and up to Monamenach (807m). This has necessitated the extension of the existing Cairngorms wildness map reported on in the Spring 2009 edition of WLN to cover this addition to the park and its immediate environs. Considering the issue of constructed hill tracks (See Calum Brown's article in WLN No. 76, Summer 2010, pg 17-18), WRi is working with the North East Mountain Trust (NEMT) to assess the visual impact and increased accessibility to remote mountain areas following track construction. Using data collected in a pilot study area by NEMT (see: [www.nemt.org.uk/hilltracks/outline.htm](http://www.nemt.org.uk/hilltracks/outline.htm)) and the existing Cairngorm wildness maps as baseline data, the effect of these intrusive features can be quantified and put forward as an argument in reforming and strengthening the current planning regulations against environmentally damaging track development. Again, results from this work are expected early in the New Year.

### **Wild land typologies**

Both the updated Cairngorms map and the map for the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park will be used to develop a series of wild land zones most probably based around a model showing core wild land, edge and periphery (non-wild) zones. These may be used for both strategic planning and park management purposes, such as gauging the likely impact of development proposals both inside and outside the park wild land.

### **A definitive national map?**

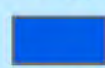
While the two existing national parks are being mapped at high resolution, there is an urgent need for a wider national level map of wild land in Scotland. The methodology developed for local level mapping of wildness in the Cairngorm National Park has now been picked up by the Landscape team at Scottish Natural Heritage who are working with advice and technical assistance from WRi to apply it at a lower resolution to the whole of Scotland. This will be used to develop a countrywide map that will be a robust and defensible dataset that will stand-up under scrutiny. The map will provide a framework for monitoring the change in the condition of the current wildness resource over time. This will replace the much misused and misinterpreted indicative search areas map published by SNH in their 2002 policy document Wildness in Scotland's Countryside (see: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/policy-and-guidance/>). Work is progressing on

# Wildland in the UK


## Top 5% wildest areas

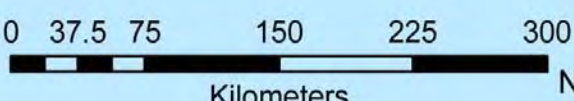
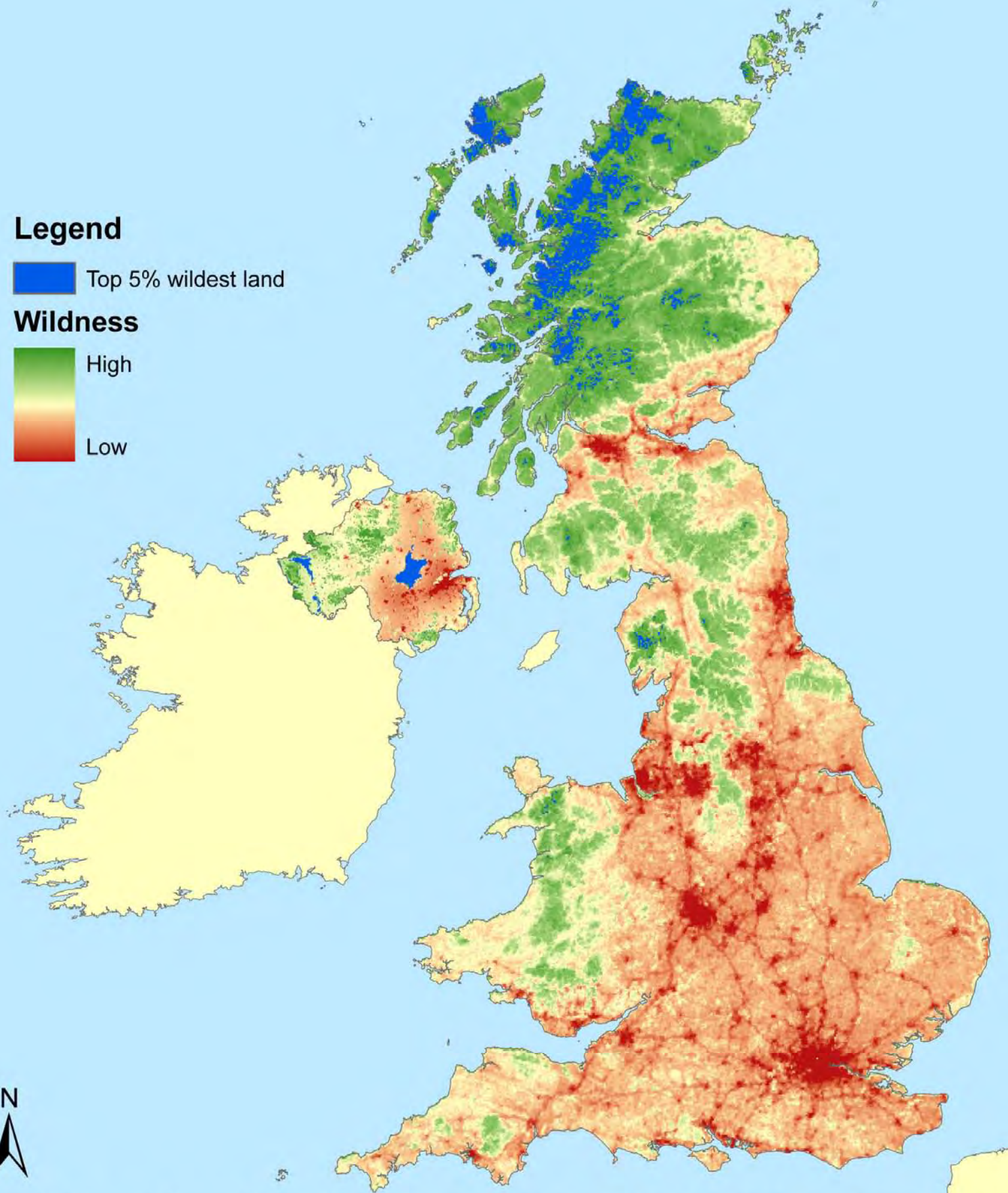


### Legend

 Top 5% wildest land

### Wildness

 High  
Low





this ambitious mapping exercise and results are expected sometime in the New Year, with the final map being accessible via the SNH website and included in the Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HWLDP).

### **Where is wild?**

Working with the John Muir Trust we have taken an even wider look across the whole of the UK in a reconnaissance level survey of wild land areas and their ownership. Here, national level datasets have been used to map wild land attributes such as population density, remoteness, road density, naturalness of land cover and ruggedness, and combine these to create a wild land continuum covering the whole of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This was “top sliced” to identify the likely pattern of the top 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25% wildest areas. Working closely with Andy Wightman of “Who Owns Scotland” ([www.whoownsscotland.org.uk](http://www.whoownsscotland.org.uk)) we have been able to help the JMT to identify those estates and properties in Scotland covering the highest proportion of the wildest land with a view to helping link existing JMT properties with those of other “wild land-friendly” owners in both public and private sectors that may be favourable towards JMT’s new wild land vision launched in Edinburgh last month ([www.jmt.org/vision.asp](http://www.jmt.org/vision.asp)). This has the potential to create a connected landscape of protected wild land across the country, but focusing

principally on Scotland, from north to south and east to west, filling some of the gaps, both real and metaphorical, left by existing designations and government policy. The UK wide wild land map is shown below where the green end of the spectrum shows the wildest areas and the red shows the least wild (see Figure 1). Here the top 5% wildest areas have been highlighted in blue and it is these and the top 10% areas that JMT are focusing on. It is worth noting that the datasets used represent the pattern of wild land attributes at a national scale and so some of the islands, particularly the Shetlands by dint of their national remoteness, look a little wilder in total than they actually are on the ground. Further work with the JMT on mapping wildness in coastal and marine areas shows more detail and gives a truer picture of wild land patterns in these islands. The map in Figure 2 gives further detail on remoteness in the Shetlands based on local level data similar to that being used for the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Parks together with models that take kayak, boat and yacht use into account.

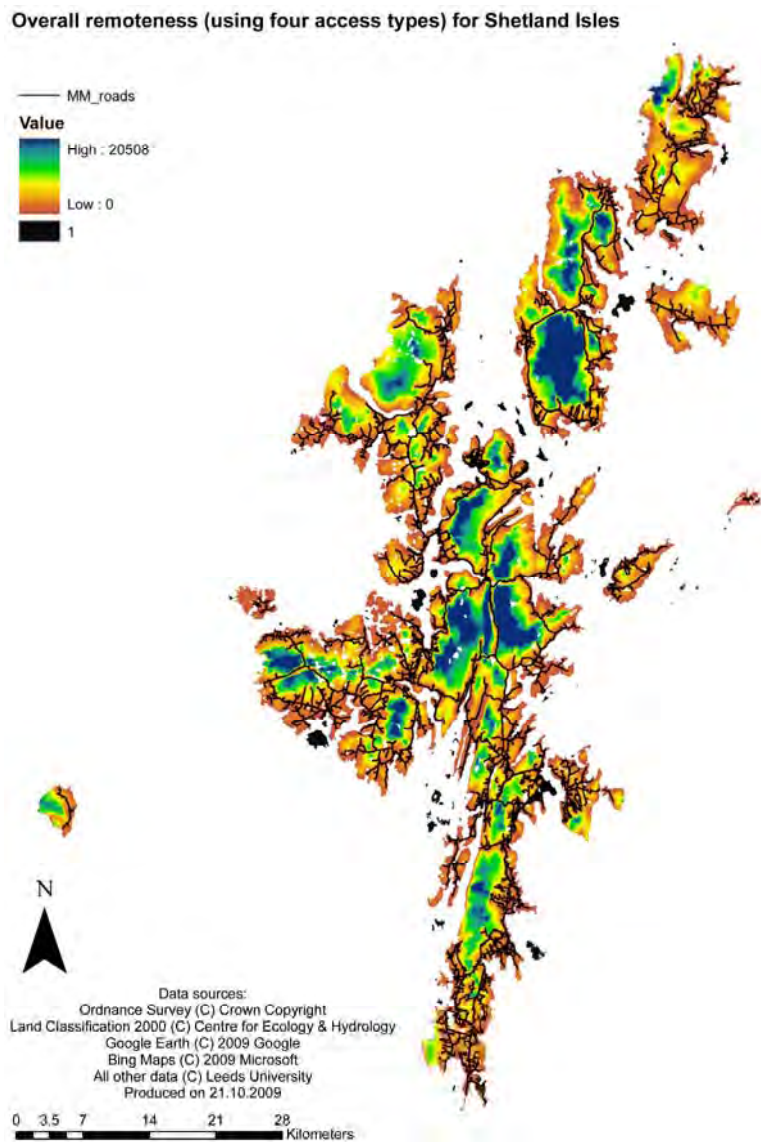
### **Wild land across Europe**

Early in the New Year WRi was contracted by the Scottish Government under direction from Rosanna Cunningham to carry out a review of the status and conservation of wild land in Europe; the final report from which was

*To the left: Figure 1*

submitted in July and is currently awaiting publication. The report covers more than forty European countries and is notable as the first comprehensive review of wilderness and wild land in Europe. To the credit of the Scottish Government, it is also the first major piece of government commissioned work arising from the recommendations of the European Parliament's Resolution of February 2009 on Wilderness in Europe and the subsequent conference on *Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas in Europe* that was held in Prague in May 2009

Figure 2



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

The report sets out to map the extent and location of wild land in Europe, identify the primary characteristics of wild land in Scotland, place them within a spectrum of wild land across Europe, and assess the elements that provide the best protection for wilderness. Key findings from the report include:

- Wild land is embedded in the Scottish psyche through its history and culture (e.g. the right to roam, the “long walk in”, the Unna Principles, Fraser-Darling’s “Wilderness and Plenty”, etc.) and due to current interest groups and NGOs such as the JMT, NTS and SWLG championing the cause.
- Although recent policy from SNH, NTS and JMT have provided definitions of wild land in Scotland, there is still a need for a clear common definition that is robust and defensible and that recognises the key distinctions between the biophysical (ecological) definitions of wilderness and those based more on perceived (landscape) wilderness.
- Wilderness across Europe is closely associated with protected areas classified under IUCN categories I and II together with restrictions on extractive land use. Zoning and ecological networking are often used as a means of protecting wild land.
- Lessons from continental

analogues of Scottish landscapes would suggest a need to carefully balance natural and cultural values, perhaps through careful spatial zoning to segregate or integrate values and use.

- While Scotland has a well developed network of protected areas that now includes national parks, none of these give specific protection to wild land that covers both the ecological and landscape aspects of the concept and meets IUCN protocols. The National Scenic Areas (NSAs) and the national parks combined, do however cover a significant proportion of Scottish wild land (e.g. approximately 50% of the top 5% wildest areas, and 46% of the top 10% wildest areas in Scotland fall within existing NSA boundaries). Notable exceptions lying out with the NSA/NP network include the Glen Strathfarrar, Glen Orrin and Glen Carron area, the Fannich, Braemore and Strathvaich Forests to the north, the upper reaches of Glens Kingie, Dessary and Pean in the Lochaber area, and Strath Dionard and Glen Golly in the far northwest. However, there is no specific provision for the protection of wild land within either the NSA or national park legislation.
- In Scotland, efforts to safeguard wild land has tended to focus on maintaining the landscape qualities that are valued for aesthetics and recreational use

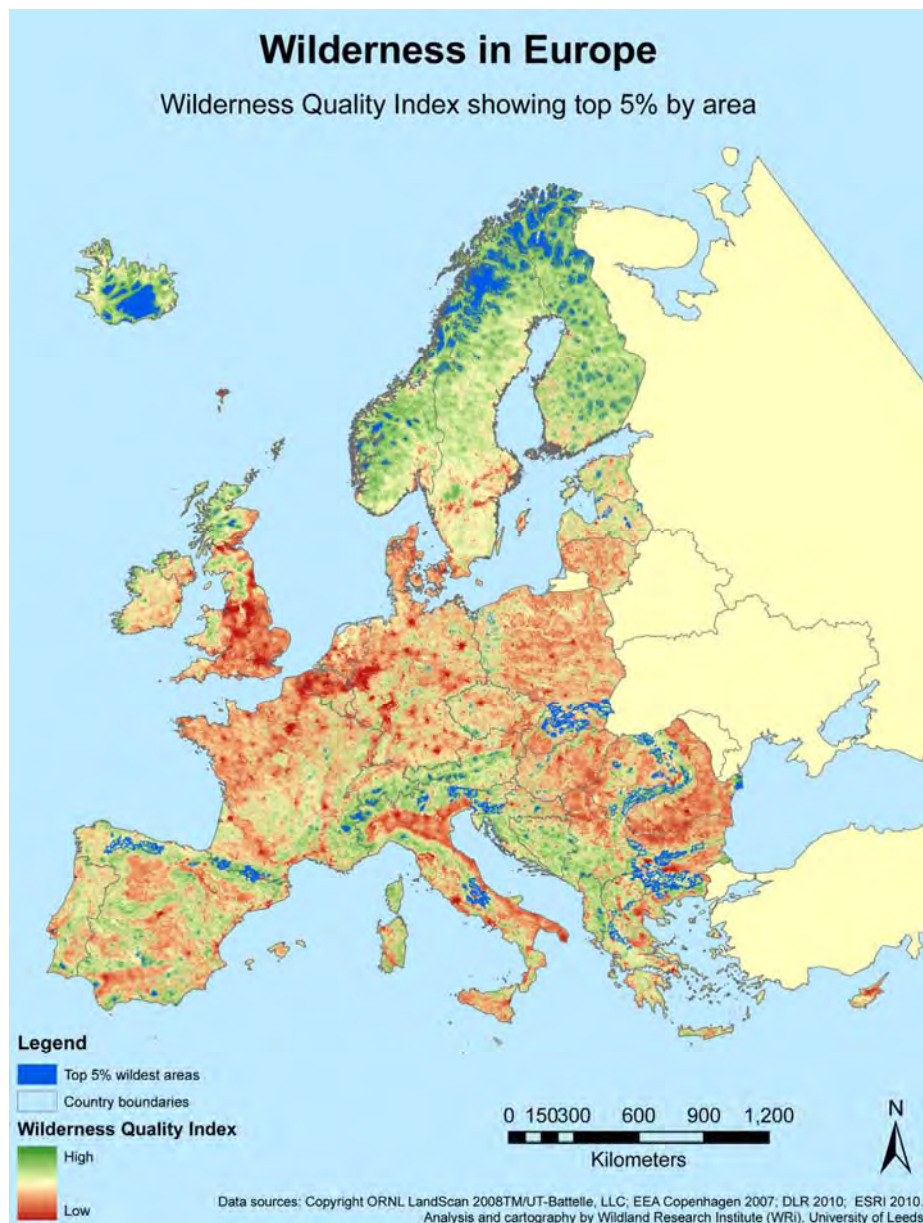


Figure 3

(e.g. by managing potentially intrusive built development through the planning system) rather than safeguarding ecological “wilderness” as is more the norm throughout the rest of Europe.

Dennis Smith

## What makes wild land WILD?

In this article Dennis Smith, an SWLG member, responds to George Charles' article in WLN 76. Dennis gives his own very thoughtful insights into the importance of cultural elements of wild land and why it is exactly that people go to wild places – to look within or to look towards nature – or to do both?

George Charles's article in the Summer 2010 issue of WLN is thought-provoking. I'm not sure if I agree with Marcus Aurelius that "the peace of green fields can always be yours in any spot". Taken to its logical conclusion this suggests that you can have an authentic experience of wildness amid the bustle of a city centre. This may work as a meditative exercise but surely this is a spin-off, depending on previous experience of the real thing (Wordsworth's emotion recollected in tranquillity). But George Charles is right to emphasise how our ideas of wildness are historically and culturally constructed. Thinking of my own experience, I grew up in small-town Scotland. My grandfather was a tenant farmer and some of my relations still worked the land. During student vacations in the 1960s I worked as a grouse beater and pony ghillie on one of Scotland's 'wildest' estates. So I was better placed than many to understand traditional land use practices from the inside. But I still

developed some absurdly Romantic ideas about the wildness of the Scottish hills, not recognising how densely populated and heavily used they had been in the recent past. It took a steep learning curve to shake off these illusions. One epiphany came when I read that the 'remote' Munro An Sgarsoch used to be the site of a cattle market, another when I heard that before the First World War the now deserted settlement of Carnoch at the foot of Sgurr na Ciche had enough menfolk to put out its own shinty team. Scotland's wild land has a human history as well as a natural history, often embedded in its placenames. It also has cultural meanings that are sometimes hotly contested. Think of the Highland Clearances. Think, more recently, of Cononish where a planned goldmine was backed with the argument (perfectly true as far as it goes) that mining is part of the area's cultural heritage. In many ways the 1960s were a golden age to take up hill-walking. Most of the Scottish hills were effectively open as long as you

showed some tact and kept a low profile during the stalking season. The days of walkers being accosted and even assaulted by keepers were pretty well over. On the other hand, commercialisation of the hills had hardly begun. Waymarked paths and interpretation panels were almost unknown. There were few guidebooks available apart from the Scottish Mountaineering Club district guides which offered solid information and the odd bit of advice but were essentially non-prescriptive. The 1960s slogan “do your own thing” applied as much in the hills as anywhere else. We were a world away from today’s profusion of resources offering to micro-manage every outing (“... after 220m cross the burn and follow the fence ...”).

Scotland’s wild areas have always been cultural landscapes. But now meanings are provided for us in an increasingly conscious top-down way. Experts offer us authoritative interpretations and the scope for random discovery is reduced, conceptually as well as physically. The countryside is increasingly managed for the benefit of tourists and “access-takers”: it operates as a theatre for city-dwellers, not a place where country-dwellers go about their own business. Economically and socially this may be no bad thing, but it makes it hard for visitors to identify an authentic otherness when everything is mediated in advance. Technological changes are as significant here as social and

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Photo: Ania Kociolek

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economic ones. Is it possible to experience the wild while carrying a mobile phone and GPS? Even if they are switched off, their existence means that (reception permitting) contact and support are only a click away. I have heard anecdotes of teenagers providing a running commentary to family and friends throughout their Duke of Edinburgh hikes. I have seen a walker bail out of a holiday on discovering that it would mean several days without phone contact. For people growing up in an environment of 24/7 electronic interaction wildness must have a new range of meanings. (Wildness begins when you lose your mobile signal?)

If the cultural meanings of landscape change over time and between social groups, and conceptions of wildness also change, where does this leave the wild land debate? Is there some underlying reality that all these ideas connect into? Perhaps different people visit wild land for different reasons. Even a single person may be searching, more or less consciously, for different goals. Some people go into the wilderness, like Jesus, to find themselves. Sometimes they envisage this as a challenge, physical or psychological: they confront nature, red in tooth and claw, in order to test their personal limits. So ‘the wild’ becomes (among other things) a site for extreme sports, where the perception of risk sharpens the senses and intensifies the emotions. But this association must be treated cautiously. Risk-taking may imply wildness but it can also occur in places far from the hills, from motor-

racing tracks to stock exchanges. Some may detect a kind of Hemingway machismo in this idea of nature as a beautiful but dangerous alien who demands to be conquered (a bull to be fought, a stag to be stalked). Some will reject this outright: the sense of self that they seek in the wild has to do with beauty and tranquillity, not adrenalin kicks. Others (like me) may feel ambivalent, remembering William Blake’s *Tyger*: “What immortal hand or eye / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?” On this line of thinking wild nature is not so much beautiful as sublime, awful in the root sense. Perhaps tranquillity has to be earned, at a price which includes fear as well as effort.

Other pilgrims seem to be searching not for themselves but for nature, looking outwards rather than inwards. They want to transcend ego as well as cultural meaning, to make contact with something that is non-human (superhuman?), perhaps timeless. They may not need a wild land movement to achieve this but there is certainly a role that the movement can play here, explaining ecological principles and providing concrete examples of conservation and rewilding. And perhaps there is a further dimension where the aim is not just to appreciate nature intellectually, from the outside, but to reach a kind of harmony with it, from the inside. The search for self and the search for nature collapse into one. At this point, perhaps, the wild ceases to be wild, or alien, and becomes part of us. Or are we part of it?

Tommy McManmon

## My Wildland

Britain's last wilderness. The long walk in. Remotest pub / tearoom / landrover / dog. The Knoydart Peninsula has plenty of clichés surrounding it, but what's it really like? How wild is our wilderness?

It's something I struggle with every day in my role as Knoydart Foundation Ranger, especially as the peninsula is fast-changing, with Inverie boasting more hot-tubs and luxury bed-linen than your average highland getaway destination. Unusually, perhaps, it's also something that residents mull over regularly. Our community consultations on land management are lively, opinionated affairs. Take the example of a potential bothy at Folach, a ruined dwelling nestling in a bowl below a popular "last Munro". My fellow ranger Jim expressed doubts at roofing this dilapidated ruin with the help of the MBA, and many locals agreed, preferring to leave the area

undeveloped. Some seemed to be of the opinion that having smoke coming out of a chimney would change the feel of the place, from a wild, lonely spot to one with obvious human intervention.

I used to agree. Now, I'm not so sure. A couple of hundred years ago, Knoydart had 1,500 residents. They were just some of the thousands of people who have influenced the Highland landscape over the years. Most people reading this journal are aware that the "wild" landscape around them is entirely shaped by humans. Perhaps a house with four walls in a wild place is the same as a denuded mountainside, or an old run-rig system visible through the heather: just a reminder that we have always been part of this landscape, and will be for as long as our species survives.

I sometimes wonder if places like Knoydart are restricted in what can be developed because of a "hill-

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walker's view" of wilderness. People wander the hills to get away from it all, to experience isolation and a lack of other people (ironically, the more a place becomes known for these qualities, the less able one is to find them, as hundreds of people start ascending the hills looking for "remoteness"). Fair enough. But does this mean that nothing should be built in these areas because of strongly held views of what is aesthetically acceptable (usually equating to "not obviously made by man")?

I don't know. The whole wild land discussion seems to come down to

individual cases, and those instances which tend to get the most attention are the ones which most people feel strongly about, such as the Beaulieu – Denny pylon situation. I completely understand why this particular "wild land outrage" arouses strong emotions – they are not ones I share to the same degree, perhaps for nimbyist reasons. If there were a proposal to construct a line of pylons over Knoydart, I would be first to object.

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grandeur of the hills. I'm a human, and I think I'm fairly uncomfortable with the idea of a landscape with no sign of fellow travellers or residents. I like to look at a roofless croft-house and imagine the lives that were lived there, surrounded by the same air and sea-breezes that I can breathe.

The wonder of Knoydart is that the sense of peace and serenity which comes with being in a wild area can be found in most places outside the main village of Inverie: one of my favourite pastimes is to sit in my postvan in a passing-place overlooking Skye, and just drink in

the view. I also like the fact that there are many, many spots where others rarely tread: after being here more than eight years I still feel like I'm exploring new territory every time I go for a walk. To sit and reflect by an old croft, where a family once worked, played, loved and lived, is a true privilege. To recognise the shape of our landscape as being man-made, and to enjoy it nevertheless, is a skill - one I hope I am learning.

Photo: Knoydart  
Ania Kociolek





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