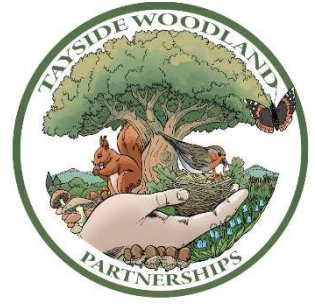


Tay Woods

No. 02 Autumn 2026



The Newsletter of Tayside Woodland Partnerships (TWP)

What is TWP?

Formed in 2021 with the objective of promoting woodland habitat restoration across Tayside, working with woodland owners, groups, schools and other organisations. We have an active membership across Tayside, a small tree nursery in Pitlochry and two part-time members of staff.

News

Chair's Report and Upcoming Events. Charlie McCarthy

It's been a busy period for Tayside Woodland Partnerships, with us having to water trees we have planted and have an ongoing responsibility for in the dry spell earlier last month and looking after our young trees at **the Tree Nursery in Pitlochry**. Our changing climate is delivering hot, dry summers and as this looks like becoming the new norm we have to take steps to help our young trees get established.

We are at the nursery most Friday mornings if any of you have a couple of hours to spare.

Our second **Blueberry Picking** event is on

Tuesday 13th October.

Thomas Thompson Farm, Ashgrove Road, Blairgowrie PH10 7EX

A fundraising event for us, free blueberry picking for all comers. And a chance to learn about TWP and chat to our volunteers.

If you would like to help at our stall, please get in touch, contact Charlie taysidewp@gmail.com

We raised £150 at our first event in September. Thanks!

A quick reminder that this is seed harvesting season. We have harvested and sown hazels, yews, rowan and alder seeds. This makes a great activity to do with youth groups and schools. If you need ideas about gathering seeds for germination, just get in touch and we'll support you as best we can.

TWP will be hosting a couple of talks in Blairgowrie and Pitlochry soon. Dates to be confirmed.



Tradecoaters Field Tree Nursery

By O, the Nursery manager

Riparian Planting

Planting trees along a river corridor is one of the tools of riverine habitat restoration: once established, the trees cool the water with their shade, hold the banks firm with their roots, shape the life in the soil and connect habitat for fish and wildlife. Riparian zones are the edge where river and land meet, and they support an unusually varied range of species, including species distinct from those of the adjoining land. That's why riparian planting is becoming a part of what TWP does, alongside our woodland work, and part of the wider push toward Scotland's biodiversity and net-zero goals and ecosystem resilience.

SEPA monitoring found more than half of the riverside vegetation on Scotland's baseline river network in poor condition, with little to no tree cover. That leaves banks and water more open to erosion, summer heat and run-off from farmland. The Tay is Scotland's largest catchment and the UK's highest-discharge river. Tay Rivers Trust plans a network of temperature loggers to find which upland tributaries are most at risk of overheating, with planting projects to follow. Supplying trees and running volunteer planting days along those tributaries is the kind of work we'd like to be part of, since salmon do best in mid-teen temperatures and struggle much above 20°C.

Trees in the ground are the start. What we aim to help develop is spreading, dappled shade at the water's edge, alongside root systems that help banks hold through winter spates. Over time, we hope that means cooler burns and better conditions for salmon and the ecosystems they pass through.

We're keen to build links with river-focused and wilding organisations across Tayside as this strand of our work grows, alongside the landowners and volunteers who already support us.

Further reading

[Cool Waters](#) (SCOTLAND: The Big Picture): how trees along Highland rivers shade the water, how much cooler shaded water can be, and why warm water is hard on salmon.

[Soil](#) (Woodland Trust): what lives in woodland soil, how tree roots and fungi work together, and how soil differs under broadleaf and pine trees.

[Flood risk management plans](#) (SEPA): Scotland's flood risk plans district by district, including the plan for the Tay.



Shee Water at Cray Bridge, below Spittal of Glenshee

Community Woodland Association's Annual Conference

TWP attended our first Community Woodland Association (CWA) Annual Conference in Fort William last week. The event comprised of an interesting mixture of talks, workshops and opportunities to visit local woodland projects around Fort William. This on top of extensive networking opportunities and shared mealtimes gave us ample opportunities to learn about what other groups are doing and to feel part of a bigger picture across Scotland. We made others aware of TWP and hopefully this will increase in future years.

The CWA networks around 200 groups across Scotland, including through their annual Conference, monthly Bulletin, quarterly Newsletter, and learning exchange visits. They also offer on-line and in-person training sessions providing in-depth support across a range of themes, including:

- Acquiring land
- Woodland management
- Social enterprise development
- Capacity building and community involvement
- Recreation, arts, culture and heritage

CWA members are responsible for the management of thousands of hectares of woodland and open space across Scotland. Just over half of these groups own their woodlands, the remainder lease or work through a variety of formal and informal partnership arrangements. If you haven't looked already at what they have to offer, then certainly well worth a look. TWP are members which might help reduce costs if you want to take part in their activities. Or, if you would like to attend next year's event as part of a TWP contingent, then let us know (and we'll flag up in advance where and when it is taking place)! And better still, we could look to attract a CWA conference to our area, perhaps in concert with local groups. Lots here to see and foreground, and certainly plenty of accommodation and venues to host the event!

<https://www.communitywoods.org/home>



Riverbank seed-mix to support Beaver-led Biodiversity

By TWP member, Munro Kerr (Alba Fiadhaich)

Images: SWT and Scotiaseeds

A new wildflower seed mix designed to ease coexistence between people and beavers has launched in Scotland this month. 'Beaver Mix' is a collaborative project between Perthshire-based rewilding business Alba Fiadhaich and Scotland's leading wildflower seed producer, Scotia Seeds, based in Angus. The native mix is designed to restore nature-poor riverbanks and woodlands with plant species favoured by beavers – helping diversify habitats while potentially reducing browsing pressure on trees.

European research shows that up to 70% of a beaver's annual diet consists of herbaceous plants such as wildflowers, grasses and waterside vegetation, with woody material more important in winter.

The mix draws on research from Germany, Norway, Czechia and Scotland. "It's great to be able to provide a mix of native plant seeds which have been shown by research and observation to be food plants of beavers," adds Giles Laverack, Director of Scotia Seeds. "Some of the plants in the mix, like yellow flag iris, can also be seen in the construction of their dams. Using this mix will help to restore the native plants and habitats along rivers and watercourses, that so much of our wildlife depends on."

Beaver Mix is intended for 'buffer zones' alongside watercourses, with best results achieved by sowing into lightly disturbed, damp soils within 10–20 metres of rivers, burns and lochs.

For Munro, the project represents a broader shift in thinking about nature restoration: "Tree planting alone won't fix our habitats. We need wildflowers, fungi, insects and healthy soils – the whole system. A wood isn't really a wood without its wildflowers."

Although Scotland has around 18% forest cover, only a small fraction is ancient woodland, and even less supports a full complement of native ground flora.

Munro hopes the product will become a staple: "In some ways, beavers have shown us how degraded our river systems are. I hope Beaver Mix helps to drive wider restoration and a re-think around what healthy rivers and woodlands should look like."

Available from Scotia Seeds at <https://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/shop/beaver-riparian-mix/>



Education and Community Report

By Education and Community Officer, Steve Robertson.

The Dun Coillich Ancient Crab Apple

It is a good time of year for apple stories. This one is also an ancient native tree story.

In the last newsletter, I mentioned a visit to ***Dun Coillich*** Community Woodland at Glengoulandie, just north of Aberfeldy. This woodland area hosts at least one, amazing ancient crab apple tree. Possibly one of the oldest trees in the area, a veteran of at least 120yrs, surely! Established at the top of a small cliff above a burn it has an ideal location for avoiding grazing and fire.

Dun Coillich has an excellent and informative website on the biodiversity of the area, including this apple tree.

<https://sites.google.com/view/dun-coillich/home/plants/trees/crab-apple?pli=1&authuser=0>

The page also links to an incredible paper on native wild apples across Scotland and beyond, *The Ecology and Genetics of Scotland's Native Wild Apple: Malus sylvestris*, 2018, by Rick Worrell, Markus Ruhsam, James Renny, Will Jessop and Graeme Findlay.

<https://futurewoodlands.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2.-Worrell-Ecology-and-Genetics-of-Scotland-Native-Wild-Apple.pdf>

The paper provides an “account of the ecology and genetics of wild apple (*Malus sylvestris*), which is probably Scotland’s least understood and most under-appreciated native tree. Commonly known as crab apple...”

One of the easily appreciated things about any ancient tree, is simply the inspiration of such incredibly amazing lifeforms. Their survival and great beauty. That this utterly incredible specimen has outlived perhaps all other trees in this location is a powerful thought, having survived through a period of recent intense deforestation, one of the only trees perhaps for miles around. Worrel *et al*, note that most crabs are between 60 to 120yrs old. If that is indeed the likely age of this tree, that places its birth at the start of the 20thC. Well before the World Wars of humans, but many years after the wild woods that its ancestors would have known. Worrel’s paper notes that some such trees are often a remnant of “agricultural abandonment during economic depressions”, or just a fortuitous growing spot planted from the dung of a bird (jays, blackbirds, wrens) or of a mammal (cows, pigs, goats, horses, people) or some other serendipity. It is certainly a brilliant location for a tree and an amazing organism whichever way its establishment came about and it now, finally, has a woodland around it, stocked with trees including its own crab apple offspring.

For TWP, one interest in veteran’s such as this is to help preserve such trees and to support and

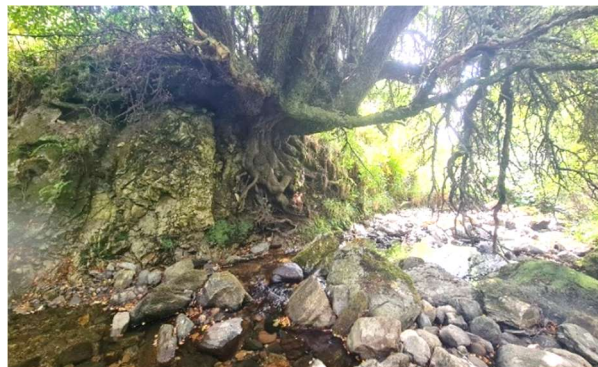


disseminate their offspring. For this particular tree, Dun Coillich seems to have that aspect well in hand with a programme for apple gathering and propagation. Our nursery in Pitlochry will hopefully augment this and do so for other special species and trees.

Also for many groups across Tayside, sweet apples, even just in their great beauty, are a great way of connecting people with trees. In earlier times, crab apple would have played a greater role and attractiveness to people and other animals, in a world with less easy access to sweetness. Worrel's paper notes the archaeological record of wild apple remains found across Europe from Mesolithic Colonsay to Norway and Switzerland, of a "Crab Fair" held in Cumbria in around 1267 and Scottish accounts of the fruit's use in juice and vinegar in the 1500's. As the authors note, the fruit keeps well, and, as with cooking apples, the palatability often improves with age.

Lets hope the sweetness of this particular Dun Coillich ancient apple tree continues to improve with age and for many more years to come. Well worth a visit.

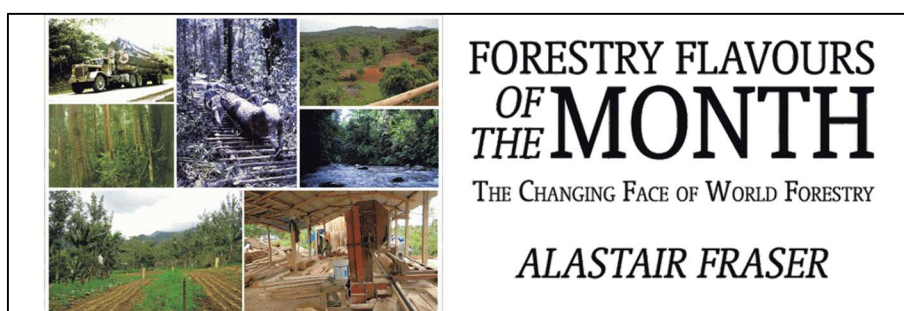
TWP hope to expand our role in connecting local people with all kinds of tree things across Tayside. A big part of this particular part-time role is to help connect with possible new members through vehicles such as this newsletter, and to link with local schools and other organisations and groups across the region. If you would like TWP to attend an event you are organising, or if you would like us to help your school or group connect with seeds, trees, or woodlands (or with our wonderful Pitlochry Tree Nursery), then please get in touch with us at stevetaywoods@proton.me



BOOK OFFER

TWP has in stock 12 copies of "Forestry Flavours of the Month" a book authored by Alastair Fraser, one of the co-founders of Tayside Woodland Partnerships. You can read three reviews of the book on the TWP website [Publications | Tayside Woodland Partnerships](#)

If you would like to receive a copy of Alastair's book, for a small donation to TWP, please contact David Young at twpmembsec@gmail.com



Funding Update – the latest news from our Finance Team!

Last month we submitted an application to the *PKC Wider Nature Restoration Fund* to support the third stage of the tree nursery build. The plan is to make an area of hardstanding outside the mesh tunnel and under the extension roof where potting up benches will be constructed.

The donation from the Pitlochry-based *Andie Millar Fund* will be used to purchase consumables for potting on of 2000 young trees. That will be a task to keep everyone busy through the winter months – look out for posts on the TWP Facebook page advertising tree potting up days – extra hands will make lighter work.

The award received this month from the *Gannochy Trust Fund* is being used to cover staff costs including a new post recently advertised for a Communications Specialist.

Highlands to Himalayas – two approaches to growing trees

By Marion Young (our Bhutan expert!)

A snapshot comparison of forestry practices in Bhutan and the Highlands of Scotland reveals some historical differences and contrasting priorities. Bhutan's focus is on preserving its vast, largely untouched primary forests, while the Scottish Highlands are engaged in a multi-decade effort to restore ecosystems and rebuild woodland cover after centuries of deforestation.



Summary Facts	Bhutan	Scottish Highlands
Forest Cover	70% of total land. Constitutional mandate to never drop below 60%	18-19% across Scotland – significantly lower in open peat dominated Highlands
Primary Approach	State protection, ecosystem service conservation, and community forestry.	High-yield commercial timber production, active rewilding and native woodland restoration.
Land Ownership	Government reserved forest land and community forests	State managed land (FLS) and large private estates
Main Challenges	Wildfire risk, overstocked forests, balancing wildlife protection with rural farming	Deer damage to trees, planting on deep peatland, restoring fragmented native ecosystems



More about Bhutan's unique approach to forestry!

Bhutan's three climatic zones:

- 1) subtropical foothills with high humidity and heavy rainfall;
- 2) central temperate valleys characterized by cool winters and hot summers with moderate rainfall;
- 3) high Alpine mountains with cold winters and cool summers.

(Source: <https://afocosec.org/an-overview-of-forestry-in-bhutan-current-situation-and-challenges/>)



Sub-tropical vegetation



Temperate vegetation



Alpine vegetation

Bhutan's ancient cloud forests and broadleaf ecosystems, stretching from subtropical to alpine zones, that are carpeted with mosses, draped in lichens, and alive with fungi, capture moisture from clouds, fog, and mist through a process known as *cloud stripping* or *lateral precipitation*. This moisture trickles down tree trunks, moves from leaf to leaf, and gathers drop by drop to form rivulets, streams, and rivers that sustain homes, agriculture, and significantly contribute to hydropower.

To quote the World Wildlife Country Director, Chimi Rinzin, "our lives are rooted in trees". She argues the point that to measure the value of trees as a percentage of GDP (in Bhutan's case timber extraction is 2-3% of GDP) ignores the lifelines that forests provide (<https://www.wwfbhutan.org.bt/?396146/>). The constitutional mandate to maintain at least 60% forest cover in perpetuity is Bhutan's insurance policy for intergenerational prosperity.

Famous Environmental Campaigners

East Scotland to East Africa: Kenyan Greenbelt Inspiration

Wangari Maathai (April 1940 – September 2011) was a Kenyan social, [environmental](#), and [political](#) activist who founded the [Green Belt Movement](#), an environmental non-governmental organization focused on planting trees, [environmental conservation](#), and [women's rights](#). In 2004, she became the first African woman to win the [Nobel Peace Prize](#).

As part of Green Belt Movement's multi-faceted approach, our programs focus on reforestation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, water harvesting, gender-based advocacy, and creating sustainable livelihoods. GBM's work aligns with global efforts to combat climate change while



addressing local needs, contributing significantly to building climate-resilient ecosystems and communities.

Climate change is a reality, and the Green Belt Movement is actively addressing it through tangible solutions. By planting trees, restoring degraded lands, and empowering communities, they are building resilience against the impacts of a changing climate.

As an academic and the author of several books, Maathai was not only an activist but also an intellectual who made significant contributions to thinking about ecology, development and gender in addition to African cultures and religions.

Learn more about her work here [wangari maathai - Search](#)

Loss of Len Seal, a much loved founder member of TWP

We were very sad to hear of the passing of Len Seal recently. Len played a key role as a founder member of TWP and is greatly missed. The following obituary was written by his partner, Kay.

Living in Perthshire, Big Tree County and hillwalking in the Borders and Scottish Highlands, Len was always aware of the beauty of trees, their variety, their constantly changing colours and their great importance to the health of our planet. A favourite book was Jean Giono's "The Man Who Planted Trees".

Knowing that a number of friends from different paths and interests were keen to set up a tree planting group, he involved himself in this with his usual enthusiasm. He was so pleased to see how Tayside Woodland Partnerships has flourished.

His last "surprise" visit to Pitlochry was to declare open "Len's Shed" (see picture). He was delighted and overwhelmed when he saw his name plaque over the door, and happy to be able to share some precious time with everyone. Not long after that, MND reduced his ability to walk independently, and his speech became weak too. Sadly, we didn't manage the return trip, which we really had intended to make.

A silver birch will be planted over his grave.



Other Things

New Staff post: Communication Special

TWP are delighted to announce that Clare McMicking will be joining our team shortly as our *Communications Specialist*. This post is part-time until July 2027 (and hopefully beyond).

Welcome Clare.

New Volunteer Wanted

We currently have a vacancy for a **Treasurer**. The workload is relatively low. Main responsibility is maintaining the bankbook and giving the accountant the necessary information to audit the accounts at the end of the year. This doesn't require expensive bookkeeping experience (but great if you do have this).

Please contact us if you are interested in helping us with this.

*Please do forward this newsletter to others who you think might be interested.
We are always looking for new members.*

*If membership is of interest to you, please contact our membership secretary,
David Young twpmembsec@gmail.com*

For newsletter things, contact stevetaywoods@proton.me
Or taysidewp@gmail.com

You can also find us at
<https://www.facebook.com/people/Tayside-Woodland-Partnerships/100078558141772/>
<https://taysidewoodlandpartnerships.org/>