

The Bailies of Bennachie

Annual Report

2021



We care about Bennachie,
its natural environment, history
and culture - protecting this unique
landscape for future generations

BAILIES OF BENNACHIE AGM 2022

It is hoped to have the AGM at the Garioch Heritage Centre in Inverurie on Thursday 24th February 2022 at 7.30 pm with restrictions on numbers. An email will be sent out and notification put on the Bailies website and Social Media sites. However, we are also making provisions for a Zoom meeting at the same time, for those who wish to join us from home.

2021/22 Trustees

Chairperson and Senior Bailie: Jackie Cumberbirch

Treasurer: Alan Henderson

Secretary and Work Party Co-ordinator: Willie Linklater

Membership Secretary, Web Master and Social Media: Donna Taylor

Vice Chair and Publications: Ann Baillie

Archive: Andrew Wainwright

Hill Warden: Peter Stock

Planning: Dave Peter

Learning Officer and Wildlife Group: Margaret Garden

Angela Groat, Alex Doig, Daniel Montgomery

**Please see our web site for more details www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk or write to:
Bailies of Bennachie, PO Box 11535, Huntly, AB54 9AD.**

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coordinator@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk (Estée Farrer - Bailies of Bennachie Coordinator)

workparties@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk



Obituary - John Bain

John Bain served as a Charity Trustee of the Bailies for 8 months. A chartered accountant, John worked closely with Brian Cornock who was Treasurer at the time, looking after the Bailies finances, with a view to taking over the role. Sadly that was not to be, as ill health forced John's retirement from the Bailies, and tragically John passed away in September 2021.

In his short time as a Trustee, John's professionalism, his quiet efficiency and his incisive understanding of issues shone through. His astute advice and contribution were greatly valued by the team. A true gentleman, John lived and was in his element on Bennachie; he and his family would be on the hill every day, be it walking, running, cycling, riding or skiing. When he joined the Bailies, it was 'to give something back', and he most certainly achieved that.



Report from the Chair



In 2021, the Bailies were successful in obtaining two grants from NatureScot: Better Places Grant 1 and 2. The first one started in February 2021 and, although only a few months long, allowed local consultants, 'Walking-the-Talk', to guide the Bailies on the realistic implementation of our long and short term goals for the hill. This consists of a staged approach, firstly looking at how visitors currently use the hill and secondly, in light of our long term goals, how the Bailies seek to manage recreation more sustainably. This includes our desire to open up communication with landowners and users in order to develop a common and sustainable vision for the future of the hill. The second grant, which started in June and finished at the end of October, enabled the Bailies to fund Estée Farrar who took up the role of part time Visitor and Volunteer Coordinator. Estée was able to work with both visitors and volunteers on the hill giving the Bailies a broader understanding of how people use the hill. In addition, Estée was able to audit many of the paths, both formal and informal, as well as encourage responsible behaviour in the countryside, coordinating with both Aberdeenshire Council and Forestry and Land Scotland to do so. As outlined in her detailed report (page 3), this was successful and the Bailies are now self-funding Estée to carry out more work in 2022.

Once we came out of lockdown, the Bailies became aware of an increase in litter appearing on the hill. In response to this we ran various campaigns to combat this ongoing issue. Aided by local scout groups, Oyne Primary School and work parties together we facilitated a Big Spring Clean on the hill during the month of June. Alex Doig, a Bailies Trustee, also worked with Aberdeenshire Council and Forestry and Land Scotland to increase the number of bins close to car parks in an effort to stop littering. Now, Bailies Volunteers and Estée empty the new bin near the pond close to the Bennachie Visitor Centre. This new bin can be used by all to prevent dog waste and litter appearing in bags by the side of the paths close to the Bennachie Visitor Centre.

In July, encouraged by Jill Matthew from The Bailies Wildlife Group, the Bailies along with help from various individuals developed a temporary carbon footprint trail near to the Bennachie Visitor Centre. This trail stayed in place until the end of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and sought to show how nature is helping us address climate change. What became obvious to me was that although nature tries its hardest, we all have to reduce our carbon footprint. We found that Bennachie forests capture the greenhouse gas emissions from only about 3000 people! The trail was visited by many people including Mark Stephen who did a piece on BBC Radio Scotland.

2021 also saw more excellent and informative wildlife knowledge added to our website. Take a look at Outdoor with the Bailies or see www.juniorbailies.org.uk. The Summer of 2021 also allowed us to get back to some archaeology work which we did on Pittodrie estate, as well as continuing the work at Druminnor (see page 6).

It is unbelievable that yet another year has flown by already. In fact, as I write this, we have limited access to Bennachie owing to Storm Arwen. The storm has changed parts of Bennachie completely and our Bailies tool container is still upended by fallen trees. It will be interesting to see how, in some windblown areas, the wildlife may benefit and we may get new native tree regeneration appearing. Rewilding on the hill!

Lastly, I would like to thank all the Bailies Trustees for their hard and enthusiastic work during the year. I wish all Bailies the very best for 2022.

Jackie Cumberbirch
Senior Bailie

Treasurer's Report

Income for the 2021 financial year amounted to £36,404. The main sources of income were grant income, legacies and trading income from the sale of publications. Further income was received from memberships, donations and bank interest.

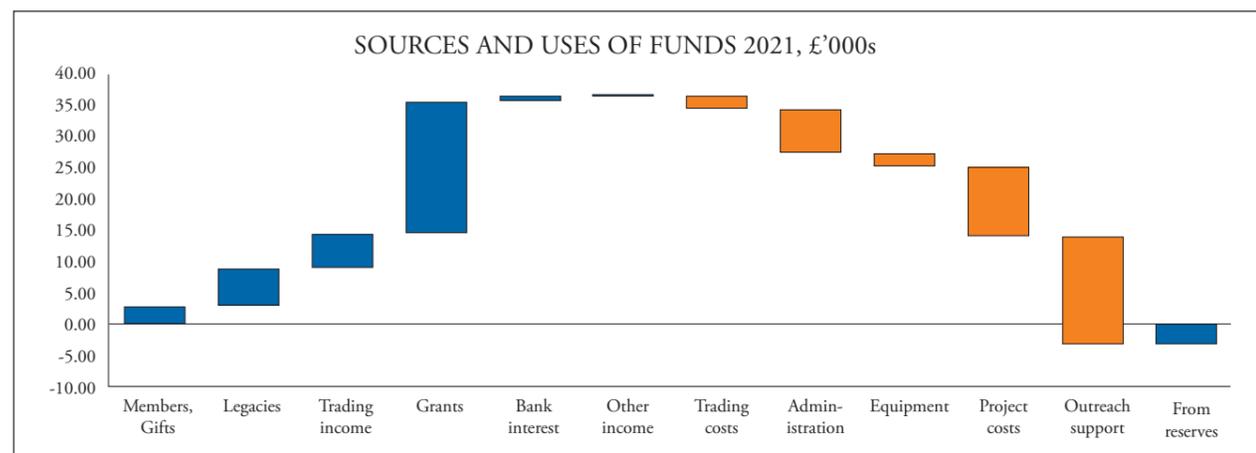
Expenditure for the year amounted to £39,826, major costs being outreach costs and project costs which were significantly funded by the grant

income. Other major areas of expenditure included administration and trading costs.

Expenditure exceeded income by £3,422 and this has been drawn from reserves reducing reserves from £129,561 at 31 December 2020 to £126,139 at 31 December 2021. This compares to a drawdown of £5,240 in 2020. All funds are unrestricted.

The 2021 figures are provisional and remain to be reviewed by the independent examiner. The waterfall chart below illustrates the sources and uses of funds for the year ended 31 December 2021.

Alan Henderson
Treasurer



Wayforward

In 2019, the Bailies undertook an initiative to formalise its charitable status under the umbrella of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. Whilst this imposed some structure on the organisation, it was considered by the Trustees that this work was incomplete. Accordingly, a two-phase process was initiated, namely The As-Is and Bailies of Bennachie 2022 (BB22).

The As-Is process sought to capture a snapshot of the current Bailies Trustees' roles and responsibilities as they understood them. A draft organisation chart was developed and a set of role description corresponding to each position was developed over 2021. This comprised interviews with the incumbents centred on the risks that each post was managing on behalf of the Bailies and the controls in place to manage those risks. The descriptions were as accurate as possible with no desire to records what maybe could or should be done. This process did highlight some anomalies where some activities were being undertaken under the Bailies' umbrella but with insufficient demonstration of appropriate controls

being in place. At the year end, we are addressing these anomalies.

A more forward-looking initiative has been the desire to devote time to take a fresh look at all aspects of the Bailies. It is recognised that the current arrangements in the Bailies are a product of custom and practice over its 50-year history. Whilst that is not a bad place to be, it may blinker or at worst, prevent beneficial changes to the policies, organisation and activities. To this end, a series of professionally facilitated workshops were planned at the end of 2021. Due to pandemic issues, only one of the workshops was able to be held in the October. Complementary to the workshops, various Trustees undertook interviews with other charitable trustees, researched on-line guidance on how other charitable bodies are organised, etc. It is the plan that this second workshop, when the pandemic allows it to occur, will allow firm decisions on whether any policy or organisation changes would be beneficial and develop an implementation plan.

Peter Stock
Trustee

Bailies Co-ordinator Report

The Bennachie Range is a very popular outdoor recreation hotspot, and in 2020 there were more visitors to the hill and nearby places, as a result of the pandemic and associated travel restrictions. It was anticipated that in 2021, Bennachie would again experience a larger number of visitors than in previous years. Increasing visitor numbers result in extra litter, more dog fouling, and pressure on multiple use paths. Consequently, the Bailies of Bennachie devised a (Bailies) Coordinator role, created in response to increased usage of outdoor recreation areas, during the COVID19 pandemic; and was initially supported by NatureScot, through the Better Places Green Recovery Fund. Estée Farrar was appointed as the Bailies of Bennachie Coordinator and commenced work in this role in late June 2021.



“Hi I’m Estée, and I am the new Bailies Coordinator. I am a passionate outdoor enthusiast, with extensive experience of working in environmental conservation and outdoor access policy. The provision of accessible green space for people for health is fundamentally important and likely to become increasingly so in the future. Within my work, I am motivated to actively protect and restoring the environment with a focus on enhancing access to green space, reconnecting people with nature, increasing sustainability and improving biodiversity, soil and water quality.

My role, over summer 2021, has focused on coordinating work between the Bailies, other stakeholders, local residents and hill users, promoting responsible access to the countryside. I spent time gathering information from a number of angles. This allowed me to directly observe the issues at hand, speak to hill users and establish what the main areas to focus on will be for the Bailies and to provide solutions where possible. During this time, I worked hard to gain an understanding of people’s usage of the hill, what they love the most about the area and, essentially, what issues may be arising as a result of increased visits and pressure on the resource.

My work has been varied and successful, and the role has been extended. It’s clear that the area is increasingly popular and with additional visitors using the area, effective management and maintenance will be important to look after the valuable resources that Bennachie provides at a number of levels. I look forward to continuing this essential work with the Bailies and the fantastic people who share our passion for the hill, into the future!”

Bennachie Centre

The Bennachie Visitors Centre (BVC) opened its doors welcoming the first visitors of 2021 on the 1st of May. The Centre was a successful recipient of a Visitor’s Attraction Support Grant which was to help towards the increased operation costs due to Covid-19. Due to the pandemic, the Centre was not fully opened and only the area selling take away drinks and snacks was available to the public. Once restrictions were lifted the exhibition areas were opened and people could sit in.

The BVC made a short film produced by Mike Lowson and narrated by former Senior Bailie, Fred Gordon. The film showcased Bennachie and the Centre - “More than Just a Hill” and can be seen on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmNPjIkC2k>)

Due to the increased numbers of those seeking outdoor pursuits this year the Bailies campaigned for litter reduction and new bins were supplied by Aberdeenshire Council.

During the final weekend of the season the Centre played host to Joanna Nicholson, a talented professional clarinettist, who played some of her own compositions inspired by her favourite Scottish mountain biking places - including Mither Tap! Jo’s Mtb Tunes video can be viewed on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ak_HAESLqQA

Finally, I would like to highlight that the Centre was not damaged during storm Arwen, however, the car park sustained significant damage with many trees uprooted. Although we are living in challenging times, we hope to re-open the Centre in April 2022 and the Bailies look forward to new projects like YS22 – A Year of Scotland’s Stories 2022 – in September on Bennachie.

Ann Baillie
Trustee

Hill Wardens

The Hill Warden Scheme was initiated at the beginning of February 2020, just before the world changed. Over the intervening time, the scheme has matured. There are two significant findings from this period:

- Other than Acts of God such as Storm Arwen, the paths change very slowly. The original 6-weekly reports became repetitive and, for that reason became less frequent, which was appropriate. Accordingly, the demand for the original number of wardens has been reduced.
- The pandemic issues affect two aspects of the paths; the ability to access them and the inability of

either the landowners or the Bailies work parties to act on the findings of the reports.

Added to the above was the appointment of a Bailies Volunteers Coordinator. Part of her scope was to collect data to form a digitised path survey database. That database will hopefully become part of a Visitor Management Strategy and also repository for all aspects of path conditions. The use of this database still needs to be road tested.

As we write, almost all paths are blocked by fallen trees which will take some time to be cleared properly. Looking forward, the nature and scope of the Hillwarden scheme will be refreshed in 2022 in light of the above issues.

Peter Stock
Hill Warden Coordinator

Work Party News

Well, it has been difficult times over the last year or two! The Bailies were unable to access the hill for work parties owing to the government Covid guidelines and our own concern and safety for our volunteers. Our last work party took place on March 2020 before we were able to return in June the next year, 2021. It was clear that during this extended period the paths were starting to suffer from lack of maintenance in certain areas.

Our first Work Party in June 2021 was a Litter Pick as part of an overall general tidy up of litter across the hill by different volunteers. It was fine to get back on the Hill again! Then, in July we cleared some of the Colony house sites of broom and bracken. August, we started clearing the drains and water bars which were in quite a state having been a long time since they were last cleared. We also cleared and maintained the trail from the Visitor Centre to Mither Tap. However, due to the poor condition they were in, we only got as far as the tree line. The last section to Mither Tap was completed the following month in September followed by the Rowantree Trail from the Car Park to Hosies Well in October. November, we were able to assemble a party to clear Hosies Well to the Mither Tap as well as the Craigshannoch Trail. Due to erosion

caused by rainfall a lot of digging had to be done and whins and broom cut back.

Unfortunately, our last Work Party in December was cancelled because of the storm damage caused by Storm Arwen, mostly the danger from fallen trees. The Bailies tool container was partially knocked over, if it didn't need a tidy up, it will certainly need one now!

We still have a lot of work to catch up on, but I am looking forward to tackling this in the coming year. Estée, our new Bailies Coordinator, is doing a grand job helping with the Work Parties and I look forward to all that we will achieve in 2022.

Harry Leil
Bailie Volunteer



(Photo: Harry Leil.)

Membership

As of December 2021, the Bailies welcomed 24 new members during the past 12 months taking our current membership to 2429. This, in a year where our events were very limited and we therefore relied hugely on our Social Media posts, is encouraging.

As a conservation charity we prefer to send out our reports and upcoming events calendar by email. If you know of someone who is a member but is not receiving any information, please ask them to contact us with their name, address and email and we will update our database.

There are a number of ways to find out what the Bailies have been doing. As well as advertised events in local papers and the Bailies website, we have a Bailies Facebook page. This is current and topical, alerting members to any incidents, sharing the users photographs and comments; a great way for us to engage with our members and other hill users. We currently have 3651 followers. If you are not on Facebook, you can look at our Website for the latest news, and we also have an Instagram page.

Donna Taylor
Membership and Social Media Secretary

Bennachie Landscapes Project Group

While observing Covid precautions, 2021 saw the Bennachie Landscapes Project Group (BLPG) begin a return to something approaching normal activity. The Group's major projects are the subject of separate articles in this document. These cover the archaeological digs at Druminnor and Pittodrie, which resumed after the Covid-related cancellation of fieldwork in 2020; and the restored Kailyard at Shepherds Lodge where the plants continued to thrive, with or without the human attention which was bestowed when circumstances allowed.

And now to dig deeper into the Group's portfolio, beginning with a call for a computer-savvy volunteer with an eye for record-keeping – an ideal project for someone for whom strenuous outdoor activity may not be their number one enthusiasm. We have a 'Digital Archive in the making', with the groundwork progressed by BLPG to the extent that a computer database is ready to be populated with the Bailies extensive archives. This will make them accessible to the wider community, including of course Bennachie's diaspora worldwide.

An ongoing insight into the range of Bailies' activities is the Display Board at the Bennachie Visitor Centre, maintained by BLPG. Along with the rest of the Centre's exhibit area, this was not accessible until the autumn, when a temporary display was installed.

Since the start of the Landscapes Project, the Group has collaborated with the University of Aberdeen on a number of initiatives, the earliest of which has resulted in the publication in 2021 of a

paper describing the 'co-production' of research into the Bennachie Colony [free to view at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20518196.2021.2014659>]. It is hoped that this relationship will continue with further research in future years.

In the near future, there is the prospect of involvement in the University's 'Voices of the Future' project, whose aims include to "build on long-standing community research around the hill of Bennachie to explore woodland histories and imagine new landscapes".

In 2022, in addition to the Group's major projects, consideration will be given to options for management of the Bennachie Colony structures, ranging from non-intervention to more proactive involvement. Also, after postponement in 2021 due to the pandemic, further insight into the Colony will feature in a re-scheduled "Feast or Famine" event - a guided walk themed on the lives of the Bennachie Colonists.

2022 has lots to offer! The Group welcomes new volunteers. If you would like to participate, just drop an email to info@bailiesofbennachie.co.uk

Colin H. Miller
BLPG Secretary

Colony house repair 2021 - before and after.
(Photo: Colin Miller.)



The Colony Kailyard - Year 5

For anyone interested in the 19th century colonists who settled on the lower slopes of Bennachie, a visit to the Shepherds Lodge colony site should be of interest. There you will find a small garden which is a reconstruction of part of the old kailyard, originally cultivated by the Littlejohn family. Over the last five years volunteers have developed this small plot planting heritage varieties of fruit bushes, similar to those used in the 19th century. Since starting this project we have made progress on identifying the types of methods used, including soil management, drainage, viral and insect infestation, and even tried some old recipes that the colonists may have used. This hands-on approach to research is very thought-provoking, making us question aspects of the past that may not have otherwise emerged. More information on the Kailyard,



including a monthly update of its progress, can be found on the Bailies website.

Chris Foster
Bennachie Landscapes Project

The fruit bushes in 'fine fettle'. (Photo: Chris Foster.)

Archaeology

Last year saw renewed operations at Pittodrie and Druminnor. The latter saw the completion of the ninth season there and we are now entering the final stages before the massive task of writing it all up. 2022 will, therefore, see a change in operational management. Alex Forbes, as ever, was a most genial and generous host as his gardens were being ravaged.

Pittodrie was, once again, highly successful under the meticulous organisation of Iain Ralston. A tremendous team of volunteers came up with some



The Pittodrie 'sun-stone' (5cms scale). (Photo: Iain Ralston.)

fascinating discoveries. Carbon-14 dating, kindly funded by Bruce Mann and Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service, suggests that Iron Age and Late Medieval structures have been discovered. Furthermore, an intriguing possible 'sun-stone' - sadly fragmentary - may attest to Neolithic settlement in the vicinity. If this is indeed a 'sun-stone', it is a very rare (unique?) find for Britain, with the highest concentration of discoveries coming from Denmark. Flemming Kaul of The National Museum of Denmark has kindly offered parallel 'miniliths' from the island of Bornholm, which exhibit similar characteristics to the Pittodrie stone. This appears to show engraved concentric lines with at least one radiating line (see photo). The stone was smoothed in preparation for the engraving. As it was found in association with the Late Medieval building, it was presumably discovered at that time and used for apotropaic purposes or simply kept as a curiosity.

We hope to build upon our successes at Pittodrie in the coming year and will, hopefully, be looking for volunteers. It is hoped to continue work on the Iron Age and Late Medieval structures as well as looking at other potentially interesting areas.

Colin Shepherd
Archaeology Adviser

Fun & Learning



fantastic set of resources on tracking, complete with a quiz, so kindly created by Lizzie Bacon, one of the leaders of the Wildlife Group.

This year sadly saw Bennachie experiencing a serious litter problem. To support the Bailies anti-littering campaign we teamed up with Keep Scotland Beautiful, Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish SPCA and the RSPB to create a package of resources for schools and members of the public to learn to 'respect, protect and enjoy' the hill. A poster competition saw over 100 children's posters displayed in the car parks. Oyne School pupils kindly did a litter pick at the Back o' Bennachie, and were shocked at the amount collected.

We are delighted that the Fun and Learning resources have been endorsed by Aberdeenshire Council and are also available to all Aberdeenshire primary schools, with excellent feedback from school staff. So why are the Bailies creating all these online resources? In helping folks to learn more about Bennachie through a greater understanding of what makes Bennachie so very special, we hope to instil a love for, and a respect for the hill, and thus foster a commitment in young people and their parents to conserve Bennachie for future generations to enjoy. We plan on gradually expanding the resources to cover other aspects of this wonderful hill.

Margaret Garden
Fun and Learning Coordinator



2021 has seen the expansion of the Fun and Learning website to include nature based programmes now covering each season. The programmes have been crafted to help primary school aged children and their families learn more about Bennachie's flora and fauna at that time of year. Teaming up with local experts we ensure that the material is both factually sound and presented in a fun and engaging way. As well as all the knowledge based material, each programme has lots of hands on activities, indoor, outdoor and online.

There is plenty of advice on how to stay safe on Bennachie. Children are guided through by the hill's mythical (and sometimes somewhat irreverent) giant, Jock o' Bennachie - no-one knows more about the hill than Jock! In fact, every programme features a videoed Doric tale about Jock's many adventures, told by Doric storyteller, Jackie Ross. We are very grateful to the Doric Board who provided funding for several of these nature-based tales in 2021.

Our thanks also go to local moth expert, David Hood who teamed up with us on the development of a fascinating set of resources on moths, a wonderful addition to the summer programme. The winter programme has a



Alex Doig, Bailies Trustee, handing over a prize for art work which highlighted the Bailies Litter Campaign that involved local schools. (Both photos: Ann Baillie)

Winter is Coming

“Winter is coming” the catch phrase from a well-known fantasy drama underlies a theme of wild northlands and impending deep winter - but rather than dragons and walking dead our countryside is visited by birds from the far north escaping their harsher winter conditions in Iceland: Whooper Swans and ‘grey’ geese.

Two species of white swan can be seen in winter: the familiar and widespread resident Mute Swan and the Whooper Swan - a fairly common winter visitor, particularly here in the Don Valley. The Whooper is the slimmer and slightly smaller but when mixed in together would be hard to separate. It is distinguished by its elongate wedge-shaped yellow and black bill, about half and half of each. Our winter visitors come primarily from Iceland where they breed so you won’t see any cygnets. A notable feature of Whoopers is their loud musical bugling calls, communicating to each other in flight and often while sitting on the water. About 16,000 visit the UK and Ireland each winter, primarily to Norfolk, N Ireland and Scotland. The total Scottish figure is about 1,600, with up to 1000 at Loch of Strathbeg and 150-200 in our immediate area of the Don Valley. The latter figure represents about 1% of the national total and is therefore of national conservation significance - hence the inclusion of the riverine habitat between Alford and Kemnay as a recognised conservation area within the next Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. Quite large groups are often seen feeding and resting on local stubble and brassica fields between Monymusk and Kemnay, and at Whitehouse and Keig between Monymusk and Alford. They all probably roost on the River Don.

The two most numerous geese species in Scotland are the Greylag and Pink-footed Goose, so-called ‘grey geese’. Both species are winter visitors from their breeding grounds in Iceland, the latter species in very large, ever increasing numbers. The Greylag is the largest and bulkiest of the grey geese. It has mottled and barred grey and white plumage and a prominent orange beak and pink legs.

Pink-feet are very similar in appearance though a bit smaller. The noticeable identifying differences are a smaller black beak with a pink band and somewhat darker head and neck. They arrive in Scotland in late September and can be seen in very large flocks, numbering often in the thousands, feeding on local stubble fields. They can be very mobile, moving noisily



Whooper Swans and Greylag Geese at Whitehouse, Alford, with several Pink-feet in the background. The goose in the middle of the photograph with the red neck ring was ringed in Iceland 2017. (Photo: Gill Bisset.)

between fields, before transferring late in the day in characteristic V-shaped skeins, often after dark, to their waterbody roosts, before leaving again early the next morning back to the fields to feed. They can be seen in large numbers on Loch of Skene where their noisy early-morning departure is a spectacular wildlife event. Their call is a higher pitched ‘ink-ink’ compared to Greylags.

Winter counts of both species are made as part of a national scheme to monitor numbers and trends. The monthly winter counts at Loch of Skene tell an interesting story. When I first took over the counts in the late 90s it was a regular roost for Greylags with up to 10,000+ present, whereas Pink-feet would number only a few hundred at best. By 2000/2001 it started to change around and numbers of Pink-feet gradually increased as the Greylags decreased. Nowadays, it would be good day if a thousand Greylags were present whereas Pink-feet commonly number 10,000-15,000-25,000+ in October/November, with a maximum of 56,000 recorded in November 2018. The numbers at Skene fluctuate, reflecting movements between the roosts here in Scotland and those in England throughout the winter, and also freezing and snow conditions. From only about 30,000 in the 60s, the UK total now numbers about half a million as the Icelandic population has increased year on year. Meanwhile, the migrant Greylag population has remained roughly steady but a large proportion now ‘short-stop’ in Orkney as mild winter conditions favour them not travelling so far to avoid harsher winter conditions in Iceland.

John Wills
Wildlife Group Leader Ornithology

Bailies of Bennachie Wildlife Group

In 2021, just as in 2020, Covid 19 curtailed the activities of the Bennachie Wildlife Group. The group leaders agreed they did not want to be responsible for organising events which could spread the virus. As I write this in early December the Omicron variant is on the rampage, so we are all hoping the vaccines will be effective and curtail this dreadful pandemic. Another complication is the shocking devastation to the forests on Bennachie caused by Storm Arwen, which blew down many trees causing a safety hazard. As a result, sadly, we are not clear at the moment when we will be able to re-start activities in the field in 2022.

In 2021 we only held 2 events. In March, Cally and Karin from the Huntly Swift Group gave a fascinating online talk about swifts, swallows and martins. They explained how we can help these birds by providing extra nesting sites. In November John led an evening owl walk through the dark forest, the weather was perfect – calm and still - but unfortunately we heard no owls. Lorna organised an outdoor drop-in session in August to collect the broken trail cameras; it was lovely to see people in person after so long and we had a useful discussion about the pros and cons of recording with trail cameras.

We circulated 4 newsletters, in January, March, June and November, addressing a range of local and global topics. These included updates from Lizzie on pine martens, wild cats, voles and mice. John advised which birds to listen for in spring and which birds to look out

for in winter especially requesting records of whooper swan counts. David suggested a number of forest and upland plants which people could record on their own walks on Bennachie. Jill noted progress with the global biodiversity and climate change negotiations.

We started our biggest venture for November’s COP26 on Climate Change. Before the summer holidays we set up a short carbon footprint trail on Bennachie. The trail complied with Covid regulations because people could walk around it at anytime at their own pace. We displayed various everyday items on the trail, such as foodstuffs, household appliances and information on travel for work and pleasure, and we marked out the area of woodland needed to capture the carbon footprint of each item. Visitors we spoke to on the trail were intrigued, and like us, rather alarmed to find out how much woodland is needed to capture the average UK citizens carbon footprint. There was a bit of media coverage about the trail in the Press and Journal (online), on the Good Morning Scotland news on Radio Scotland, and the Scotland Out of Doors radio programme produced a podcast about it. Fortunately, we dismantled the trail before Storm Arwen blasted its way across the North-East

Let’s hope the pandemic runs its course in 2022, and we can meet safely in person and explore our local wildlife together once again.

Jill Matthews
Wildlife Group Leader



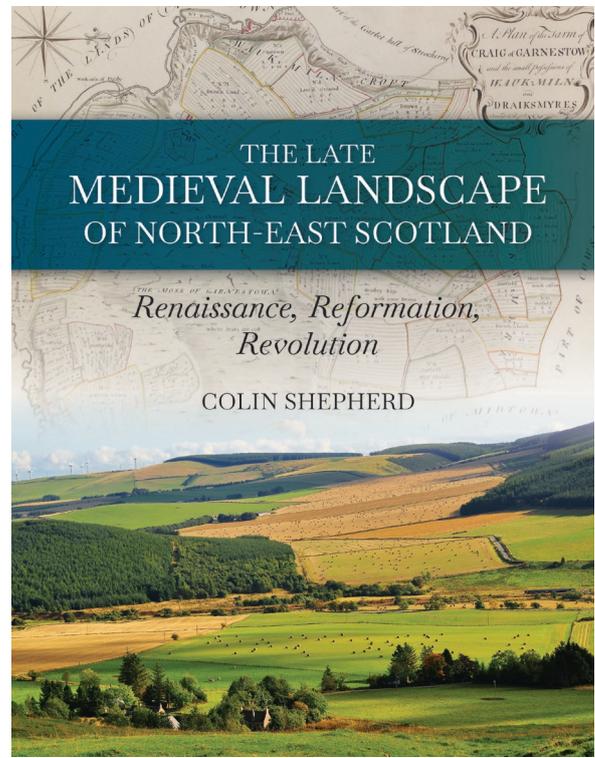
(Photo: Kerry Clark.)

Bailies Books and App

There are a range of informative and interesting books published by the Bailies about Bennachie. The four volumes of the Bennachie Landscapes Series tell the story of research into various areas and aspects of the hill range. There is a classic guide to the hill and copies of 'Bennachie Again' available.



will be able to purchase the book at the reduced cost of £31.99 (R.R.P. £39.99) until the end of February by quoting the offer code 'Bennachie20'.



The Bennachie App

And don't forget - if you've not done so already, download the Bennachie App and learn more about the squatter 'Colony' of Bennachie.

2021 saw the publication of a landscape history of the North-east that grew out of research carried out for the Bennachie Landscapes Project. The 12th-century Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution are used here to define a framework for considering the cultural changes that affected this region of Scotland. These include the dispossession of rights to land ownership that continue to haunt policy makers in the Scottish government today.

The author paints a picture of rural life within the landscapes of the north-east between the 13th and 18th centuries by using documentary, cartographic and archaeological evidence. He shows how the landscape was ordered by topographic and environmental constraints that resulted in great variation across the region and considers the evidence for the way late medieval lifestyles developed and blended sustainably within their environments to create a patchwork of cultural and agricultural diversity.

The book may be ordered direct from the publishers at www.oxbowbooks.com. Bailies members

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