

Teachd an Tìr

The Bounty of the Land

SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE
DUALCHAS
NADAIR
na h-ALBA

Reporting on the work of Scottish Natural Heritage in the West Highlands and Western Isles

AUTUMN 2005

ISSUE NO 3

AM FOGHAR 2005

Sunart Wins International Nature Conservation Award

A Lochaber-based project that has been working to restore local oak forests for the past ten years, was last month awarded international honours.

The Sunart Oakwoods Initiative, which operates in the Ardnamurchan and Morvern area of Lochaber, has won a 2005 Eurosité Award for its outstanding contribution to the positive management of Natura 2000; the network of nature conservation sites across the European Union. The awards reflect outstanding examples that promote important sites and share best practice through management, interpretation and community

participation. The award was presented to Brian Eardley of Scottish Natural Heritage, on behalf of the partners, at a ceremony at the European Nature Conference at the end of September, in Apeldoorn in the Netherlands.

Welcoming the award, Deputy Minister for the Environment and Rural Development, Rhona Brankin, said: "Sunart is a very special place in international terms and is widely recognised as one of the best examples of woodland habitat in the UK. The award recognises the considerable efforts of Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and a great many other people who have worked together over a number of years." The Sunart Oakwoods Initiative (SOI) was first established in 1996 with the aim of restoring and expanding the existing native woodlands. For more information you can visit the website at www.sunartoakwoods.org.uk. The work carried out so far has included the removal of 240 hectares of non-native conifer trees that were planted within the oakwoods, removal of large areas of highly-invasive Rhododendron, and



Wildlife hide at Garbh Eilean

control of grazing in certain areas of woodland. Over 18,000 new native trees have also been planted.

The Initiative has involved areas of forest managed by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), as well as areas of wood in private ownership. It has combined nature conservation with economic and amenity benefits to the local community, and has reaffirmed the cultural links with the natural environment. Funding has been provided for various projects, by Millennium Forest for Scotland, the European Union, Scottish Executive and local agencies.

Other projects achieved through the Initiative, include the construction of 10 kilometres of new footpaths, creation and improvement of nine new carparks, the production of a tourism strategy, and an initiative to encourage visitors to the woodlands outwith the main tourist season. The Initiative has also been heavily involved with the development and promotion of local skills, and in 2004 the Sgilean na Coille woodland skills project was initiated. This project aims to run training, demonstration and awareness-raising events to assist local people in getting the most out of their local woodland resource. Revival of traditional skills, and development of new

skills is also a key element. Sgilean na Coille has been funded through Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Lochaber Enterprise, Communities Scotland and LEADER+. A Project Officer is employed to run the various activities, and relations have been developed with the Valvestino area of northern Italy, where similar projects are being carried out. The project has a website (www.sgileannacoille.org.uk), which gives further details.

Commenting on the award, Brian Eardley, SNH's Area Officer covering the Sunart area, said 'it is a fantastic achievement for Sunart to receive this Eurosité Award. It is a great honour that a European organisation such as Eurosité has recognised the work that we are doing down here in Morvern and Ardnamurchan. There has been a lot of hard work put in over the years, by a huge number of individuals, as well as the government Agencies involved, but the results are there for all to see. This is a fine example of a site which has been designated for nature conservation, attracting funding from a wide range of sources, to provide economic and social benefits to the local population. SNH are delighted to be involved in this partnership, and look forward to continuing its

involvement, working with local people to bring nature conservation benefits to the woodlands'.

Much of the woodlands are designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The designations are for a range of natural heritage interests, including upland habitats, woodland, lichens, butterflies, dragonflies and otters, and means that all these interests are important in a national context.

The importance of the Sunart woodlands has also been recognised through its inclusion in the recent Aig An Oir / At the Edge art exhibition which was held at Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden, and featured artwork by local artists and members of the Society of Wildlife Artists, celebrating the Atlantic oakwoods of Scotland's west coast. This exhibition was opened by Deputy Minister for the Environment and Rural Development, Rhona Brankin.

The partners in the project include the communities of West Lochaber, Forestry Commission Scotland, Lochaber Enterprise, The Highland Council and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).



Brian Eardley (right), SNH, receiving the Eurosité award

CELEBRATING GEOLOGY WEEK



A group of 18 people took up the offer of a guided walk to Spar Cave at Glasnakille on the Isle of Skye with the Highland Council Rangers as part of Scottish Geology Month. The floor of the cave (formed by erosion of an igneous dyke by wave action) is coated in wonderful calcite ripples (see photo) which have crystallised out of the lime rich water oozing from the Jurassic limestone cliff above. Stalactites meet stalagmites to form the magnificent spars of calcite which give the cave its name. Although the cave is now well above sea level, access is at low tide only by means of a path which skirts round the base of the cliff.

SNH Mod Competition Winner Announced



Mairi Gillies, PPR Officer, SNH, presented the overall prize-winner Isabella Blakey, Lionel School, Ness, Lewis

Thug Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba urrasachd do fharpais postair na h-àrainneachd airson clann-sgoile aig a' Mhòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail. Thugar seachad na duaisean rè seachdain a' Mhòid ann an Steòrnabhagh. Anns a' chiad àite airson 13-15 bliadhna dh'aois thàinig Isabell Blakey à Sgoil Lionail. Anns a' chiad àite airson 9-12 bliadhna dh'aois thàinig Natalie Wardlaw à Bun Sgoil a' Ghearasdain. Bhuannaich Eilidh Munro à Bun Sgoil Innis an Uillt a' chiad àite airson 9-12 bliadhna dh'aois. 'S e Isabell a bhuannaich an fharpais gu h-ìomlaine leis an dealbh àlainn aice, agus fhuair Sgoil Lionail £250. Bha a h-uile dealbh a thàinig a-steach uabhasach math agus tha Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba a' coimhead air adhart ri leantainn leis an fharpais seo anns na bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn.