

Scottish Charity 048467

Now in our sixth year of activities to establish flower rich meadows, winter seed crops and to enhance other wildlife friendly sites.

We continued to expand our range of activities and continue to learn through our experience of what works well and what does not. Several bird seed crops and annual meadows were established and we worked with three additional landowners to establish perennial meadows.

Several thousand finches and other bird species enjoyed the seeds throughout the winter. We now have recorded 48 species of birds using the fields, and stonechat and twite were new additions this winter.

SFW volunteers joined CNP staff and other volunteers on work parties to rake up cuttings and to plant seeds and plug plants at several sites.

In Tulloch, we have an agreement with Highland Council to manage a stretch of roadside verge where we have planted a range of wildflowers and where there is a NO MOW policy till the end of summer.

In addition to the local sites which we funded and established, we responded to numerous enquiries for information and advice coming from all over UK. In late July we held an open afternoon when we visited a few fields and enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea laid on by Morag.

Once again, we are grateful to our small steering group, our volunteers and to all our patrons, supporters, tractor drivers and seed suppliers for their support.

Details of seed mixes are given on our website:

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

**Mousa**

**0.5 ha**

**sown on 13<sup>th</sup> May**

Another very successful field just along from the Nethy Hotel. Part corn annuals and part bird seed. Enjoyed by locals and visitors and by 200 linnets and chaffinches during winter. Several roe deer also enjoyed the tasty bites during summer.



Photo 19<sup>th</sup> July

**Balliemore**

**1 ha**

**sown on 13<sup>th</sup> May**

Tractor sown on 13<sup>th</sup> May. This field did very well again but it did feel the summer drought a bit. We perhaps sowed the bird seed rather too heavily. The phacelia was buzzing with bees during July and August and ca. 700 finches (linnets, chaffinches and a few redpolls, twites and reed buntings) used the radish and mustard during winter. Wild pheasants and pigeons had a good summer locally and several were present all winter. Buzzards and sparrowhawks were regular hunting the birds or mice and voles.



Balliemore just coming into bloom

Photo 19<sup>th</sup> July

**Balliefurth**

**0.25 ha**

**hand sown on 1<sup>st</sup> June**

A small corn annual meadow with some phacelia added. This small site had been 'cultivated' by 5 Tamworth pigs in the weeks before sowing. They did a thorough job. Just beside the Speyside Way so it was much admired by walkers and others.



Aileen and Roy Dennis discuss the annual meadow at Balliefurth on 17<sup>th</sup> August.

Also present are two of the Bailies of Bennachie in Aberdeenshire who visited to gain from our experiences here in Strathspey.

**Ballinluggan 1.2 ha sown on 13<sup>th</sup> May**

Three sections to this field. Approximately one third, corn annuals (featured) one third bird seed (featured) and one third perennial meadow.

Crops did well and 3-400 linnets enjoyed the radish and mustard from late October onwards. Lots of brown hares up the Dulnain and they loved the rich feeding in the meadows.



Flower meadow in late July

photo Mark Hamblin



Bird seed crop, radish and mustard late July

photo Mark Hamblin

**Caledon**

**0.75 ha**

**sown on 13<sup>th</sup> May**

This field was a corn annual and bird seed mix last year but in agreement with the owner we sowed a perennial mix this year. It established well and was cut in October and cuttings raked up by SFW work party on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. We also sowed some yellow rattle to help prevent it being dominated by grasses. A few sheep grazed on it late autumn. Several roe deer enjoyed this field all summer.



SFW volunteers raking up the cuttings and sowing yellow rattle at Caledon on 22<sup>nd</sup> October

**Croft 20**

**0.5 ha**

**sown on 13<sup>th</sup> May**

This field had been in a bird seed and corn annual crop for the past two seasons but this year we sowed a more permanent perennial meadow.

Despite the heatwave and dry conditions in July it established well.

By mid-July the meadow was a colourful mixture of grasses and flowers which attracted the attention of many passers-by. By October the field was full of colour from the corn annuals, and many of the different types of grass could be identified.

On October 12<sup>th</sup> we hand sowed some yellow rattle seeds hoping that this will establish well and reduce the dominance of grasses.

Shortly after ploughing, a pair of oyster catchers nested but sadly their eggs were predated, probably by crows.

Throughout the year, a good variety of birds were sighted. Other wildlife included roe deer, brown hares, common frogs, field mice and voles.



Croft 20 in full bloom

photo 13<sup>th</sup> July

Ian MacEachern

**Easter Tulloch      0.5 ha + 1.5 ha      hand sown on 18<sup>th</sup> May**

Despite the heatwave and drought of July, fields did very well and flowers were still blooming into November! After the very mild spell in early November, the weather was more seasonal and by mid-December we had a cold wintry snap with keen frost and heavy snow. A large flock of ca. 800 finches built up in the bird seed crop and was quite a spectacle. A few pheasants and a single red-legged partridge also used the field. A pair of stonechats were present during the December cold spell, and this was the first time we have recorded stonechats in our fields. We visited these fields in July during our open afternoon.



Photo 28<sup>th</sup> July      our open afternoon at Easter Tulloch



## Castle Roy

several small patches ca 0.25 ha

When SFW volunteers prepared the site and sowed a range of perennial flower seeds in September 2021, little did we expect the glorious show of poppies which developed this summer. We simply don't know if it was the autumn sowing or perhaps lots of poppy seed in the soil which was brought in, but what a show it was and it gladdened the hearts of locals and visitors alike. Aileen and volunteers strimmed all the spent vegetation in the autumn and cleared it off site. We also winnowed lots of the poppy heads for seed for next season.

SFW are working closely with the Castle Roy Trust to continue to maintain and enhance the grounds around the castle for nature and for people.



Autumn sown poppies at Castle Roy

image 12<sup>th</sup> June



Castle Roy on 27<sup>th</sup> June

**Dellifure**

**1ha**

**sown on 13<sup>th</sup> May**

SFW assisted and advised local caretaker Duncan Grant on this meadow which is part of the Natural Burial Ground down the Spey at Dellifure. Gerald Calder and friends brought along their vintage farm machinery and tools to prepare and sow a perennial meadow, which by July was a blaze of colour and buzzing with bees and butterflies.

The spent herbage was mown in October and raked up on the 11<sup>th</sup> October. Desmond and Duncan sowed additional yellow rattle seeds on the 17<sup>th</sup> October.

We await with interest to see how this meadow develops.



Jock using his old 'fiddle' to sow seeds at Dellifure

Photo Duncan Grant



Dellifure in full bloom and buzzing with bees

Photo 7<sup>th</sup> August



Gerald and team raking up cuttings at Dellifure on 11<sup>th</sup> October

## The Lazy Duck

SFW are helping The Lazy Duck to manage a grassland field in the hope that over the years it will become a species rich meadow. In September of 2022 volunteers from the Lazy Duck and SFW got together to sow Yellow Rattle into the grass which had been partly scarified. We also sowed flower seed, some of which we had harvested ourselves from other sites. About 400 plug plants had been grown by SFW and these were planted in too. We look forward to visiting in the spring and seeing what comes up!



Aileen, Marion and Rebecca ready to sow yellow rattle seeds at the Lazy Duck

**Creg ny Baa**

**established 2021**

**report covers 2021 and 2022**

2 acres ploughed, harrowed, sown and rolled in May 2021 with SFW funding and an upland meadow mix from Scotia seeds, the first year saw mostly arable weeds dominate with the field buzzing with bees on hemp nettle. The field was cut with trimmers and scythe and raked into habitat piles with help from CNPA and SFW volunteers. Over winter the field was used by up to 200 bramblings, probably feeding on hemp nettle and orache seeds. By spring 2022 thanks to the rich soil grasses were returning vigorously and many thousands of thistles, dock and ragwort established. Richard dug and pulled most of the docks and thistles and some of the ragwort and through the year gradually ox eye daisy, campion and knapweed established so that by summer 2022 they flowered prolifically and again the field was full of bees when the sun shone. Gradually we found individuals and patches of other species including yellow rattle, wood avens, wild carrot, cowslip, hedge mustard and patches of finer grasses. Richard cut patches through the year by scythe to give a variety of flowering times and to remove nutrient. We watched dozens of finches, tits and thrushes with broods feeding amongst the uncut patches, especially where docks, thistle and ragwort remained. In autumn we cut most of the field by scythe and SFW raked this into habitat piles which are busy with lizards, toads, mice and voles and patrolled by buzzards during the day and owls at night. In late autumn we sowed 1kg of yellow rattle seed and started growing on plug plants of some species that haven't germinated well including yarrow, scabious and hedge mustard to plant out later in 2023. Report by Richard Mason





SFW and CNP volunteers raking up cuttings at Creg ny Baa in October

## Verges project

Aileen has been corresponding with Highland Council Roads Dept to set up a trial project in Tulloch. This is to safeguard and enhance some stretches of flower rich roadside verges. This season we have identified a section of verge and have agreed with HC that it should not be mown till very late in the summer. SFW volunteers strimmed it last autumn and have planted plug plants and sown yellow rattle seeds. We watch with interest to see how these develop.



No Mow sign in Tulloch

Image 8<sup>th</sup> June



Maureen and Amanda planting at the Tulloch verge

We look forward to spring of 2023 and to continuing our work in the local area.

Thanks again to all who participated with practical volunteering.

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