



Speyside Fields for Wildlife

2024 Report

This was our 8th season of creating and enhancing local wildlife sites. It was a busy year with several projects underway and numerous other sites visited to give advice or practical assistance.

Most sites were prepared and sown in mid-May, but this was followed by an extended cold and wet spell, so, germination was poor and grasses and weeds got established to the detriment of our flower and perennial mixes. Eventually, in early August summer did eventually arrive and most sites bloomed well.

On July 7th we held a very successful SFW BBQ which was well attended by our supporters. Thanks to Ian and Gill Williams for much of the cooking and to Ronan for providing the venison burgers.

We held our open afternoon on the 14th of August and were blessed with a good turn out on a fine sunny afternoon. On the 1st September we shared a marquee with the CNPA at the Greentown (in Grantown) Show where we had a display and chatted to lots of folk about our work.

Mousa

0.5 ha

hand sown on 20th May

Thanks to Michael and Mhairi Sandison, this is the seventh year we have sown annual flowers and winter bird crop in this field. Shortly after the site was ploughed an oystercatcher nested in the field so this prevented further tractor operations. It was hand sown on the 20th May and despite the seeds not being harrowed in and rolled, it established well. Sadly, the oystercatcher failed after incubating for over two weeks. Situated just beside the hotel and in the village, this field has been very popular with locals and visitors alike.

We will review this field for next year as there clearly has been a build-up of yellow corn marigolds which rather dominate other flowers. We will endeavour to have a greater range of colours in this field which is so close to the village.



Delegates admire Mousa during our open afternoon on August 14th

Balliemore 1 ha NB, not sown this year!

This field had been in a flower and bird seed crop for the past four years, but the owner rented it to a local farmer this year. It was ploughed and sown with grass in the spring. However, there must have been a rich seed bank from previous years as it flowered very well throughout the summer. We have agreed with the owner to leave it stock free till the first of March.

Again, you can see how the yellow corn marigolds have become well established and rather dominant.



Balliemore on 26th July

Easter Tulloch 2 fields approx. 1 ha Hand sown 17th May

The main field had been in corn annuals for the past three seasons but this year, in an attempt to convert it to a more permanent crop, we sowed a mixture of perennial seed and some corn annuals.

The cool wet weather through late May and into July did not help germination and instead a mass of agricultural weeds such as corn spurry and sheep sorrel established and compromised the flower plants. However, the weather picked up into August and eventually the flowers appeared and gave a good show when we visited during our open afternoon on August 14th.



Easter Tulloch on our open day 14th August



Easter Tulloch on 14th September

The second field at Easter Tulloch was also sown on May 17th with a mix of corn annuals, bird seeds and black oats. It too got rather swamped by weeds due to the prolonged cool wet June and early July, however, it recovered well when the weather warmed up and was looking great on 24th August when this picture was taken.



The small field at Easter Tulloch. A good show of corn annuals, black oats and wild bird seeds. Photo: 24th August. This field flowered well into October.

Balliefurth 3 patches 0.5 ha hand sown 31st May

As with other sites, establishment was slow. The bird seed crop established well but it was not till mid-August when summer eventually arrived that the flower patches sprung into bloom. They looked great and on warm days were alive with bees, butterflies and other insects.

These sites are particularly valuable as they are adjacent to the Speyside Way and can be enjoyed by walkers and cyclists as well as wildlife.



The wild bird seed crop at Balliefurth on 24 July



One of the Balliefurth annual flower meadows on 9th September

Broomhill Court

This new area in Nethy bridge was sown with a mixture of cornfield annuals and a perennial flower and grass mix. We will be monitoring the Perennial mix in subsequent years and local residents are actively managing the site.



Broomhill Court 18 September 2024

Clury

4 small meadows

hand sown 16-17th May

Four small areas were prepared in the old orchard area beside the farmhouse. These had been used as a hen run and had been grazed by horses recently. Three patches were sown with a mixture of perennials and corn annuals and the fourth site with wild bird seed and black oats.

As with other sites this year, establishment was slow and two of the sites were rather overwhelmed by thistles, docks and grasses, probably because of enrichment from the hens and horses.

The bird seed patch flourished well during August but it was not till the heat came in September that the flower sites were at their best.



Aileen in one of the flower patches at Clury on 17th September

Dellifure

Dellifure is the natural burial site downstream of Grantown on Spey. SFW helped create a perennial meadow in 2020. It flowered well this year but was rather dominated by white oxeye daisies. In the extensive grassland adjacent to the flower meadow, moles had been busy during the winter so we rustled up a small work party and inoculated many of these with perennial flower seeds in May.

Gerald Calder mowed the meadow in September and removed the toppings. Let's see how it develops over the coming seasons.



Dellifure meadow on 14th July.....

Balliemullich

3 ha box seeder then harrowed on 16th May

This field was sown in two parts. A mix of corn annuals, phacelia and black oats at the top of the field nearer the road and a mix of bird seed: radish, mustard, triticale and black oats, lower down.

Due to the prolonged wet spell during the summer, agricultural weeds such as corn spurry and sheep sorrel became well established and tended to smother the sown seeds.

Wood pigeons and crows too were very active just after sowing and had an impact of the seeds.

However, when summer eventually arrived, the flower seeds began to flower and there was a good show which continued well into autumn.

On 2nd January a lovely charm of 25 goldfinches along with some yellow hammers and chaffinches were feeding on the flower heads. We perhaps sowed too many black oats as they rather swamped the flowers.



Balliemullich on 25th September

Glenbeg

This was the second year of management at Glenbeg. The grassland acres have been cut and the arisings baled in 2023 and 2024 as part of a management plan to encourage perennial flowers. The yellow rattle hand sown in 2023 was evident in the summer of 2024 but was significantly grazed. In autumn of 2024 yellow rattle was again sown along with an introductory quantity of Scotia Seed Perennial flower mix. This was undertaken by a contractor with an agriseeder machine thus avoiding ploughing. This season we erected 20 tree guards around aspen suckers and Iona tries to reduce the rabbit population during the winter.

As summer approached, Aileen organised a plant inventory with Rebecca from CNPA and Sam from Plant Life.



Castle Roy



Castle Roy on 14th July

The meadow area at Castle Roy flowered well with a good variety of Perennial wildflowers including Pink and White Campion, Yarrow, Wild Carrot and Oxeye Daisy. The established meadow was cut in September. The Motte surrounding the castle was also cut and the arisings removed. In October a work party of volunteers scraped patches on the Motte to sow yellow rattle and small sections of wildflower seed. In March 2024 a wildlife hedge of 100metres was planted with 10 different native species. Our thanks to excellent local contractors who prepared and planted the site and erected fencing to prevent damage by hares. The wet spring and summer helped the establishment of the young shrubs.



Lodgepole pines on Tulloch Moor

In late autumn we diversified a little from our normal work of establishing flower meadows and bird seed crops. For many years lodgepole pines (*pinus contorta*) have been regenerating on to a forest bog near Mhor Cottage. The site is within the Abernethy Forest SSSI and SPA so after discussion with NatureScot and Scottish Forestry, we got the go-ahead to fund the removal of these non-native conifers.

Douglas Carcerie a local young man from Aviemore took on the contract and he and his partner Shona felled several hundred trees in late autumn.



Douglas felling Lodge Pole pines on Tulloch moor. 26th November.

Speyside Fields for Wildlife is grateful for the financial contributions made by private individuals and to volunteers' assistance throughout the year.

In 2024 SFW was also supported through grants from Cairngorms National Park, The Nature Resilience Fund of The Cairngorms Trust, The Swire Charitable Trusts and Wild Isles Aviva. The Woodland Trust provided a number of the Castle Roy hedge trees.

Deborah Dugan
3/4/25