

Tarras Valley Nature Reserve

Spring 2023 Newsletter

The first signs of spring are finally here in the Tarras Valley, with birds singing, buds on trees and even our first lamb!

Despite a cold, wet winter we've been busy with everything from running the farm, planting trees, looking after our properties and running our education outreach programme.

Here's a snapshot of what we've been up to over the last few months!



Woodland Creation and Restoration

Tree Planting

We had a fantastic community tree planting day at Hallpath in February. A brilliant turnout with hundreds of native trees planted across the site, to help with the ongoing site restoration from larch plantation back to a more wildlife friendly native woodland. We planted a mix of Rowan, Aspen, Oak, Blackthorn, Bird Cherry, Hawthorn and Alder.

Since the plantation blew down during Storm Arwen it has been a huge team effort across so many organisations and individuals to help get us to where we are now and we're really excited to see how the site starts to regenerate now we are coming into spring.

Looking after our ancient woodlands

The Tarras Valley Longwood ancient woodlands are an incredibly special habitat with our infamous veteran oak trees which are hundreds of years old.

These wonderful old trees have their own unique ecosystem and can provide a home for hundreds of other different species like fungi, mosses, insects and birds. To really thrive, these trees need lots of space and light to keep growing to a grand old age - some ancient oaks can live for more than 1000 years!

At the moment, our stunning veterans are really crowded by younger birch trees which are blocking light, casting heavy shade and this is causing them to decline with lower branches starting to die back.

We are busy working with The Woodland Trust to plan some birch thinning over the coming year (outside of bird nesting season). This is all so that these magnificent trees get the light and space they desperately need so they can be conserved for many hundreds of years to come.



Restoring our Peatlands

We have been out surveying our extensive peatland habitats across the reserve, using 3D scanning technology and taking peat depths to better

understand the condition. These peatlands are very damaged, eroding quickly and a big source of carbon emissions in their current state.

Over the next few months, the Crichton Carbon Centre (funded by Peatland Action) will be continuing surveying all the peat drains and hags across the reserve which will help to create a restoration plan that allows us to access funds for works on the ground. We're right at the start but it's a very exciting partnership to restore such an important landscape!



Education and young people

The warmer weather, singing birds and sprouting plants point to more than just the arrival of Spring! March-June are our busiest months for working with schools and running educational activities on the reserve. In the next newsletter we will have much more to share about our upcoming education schedule, but that doesn't mean we haven't been busy over previous months.

The Langholm Academy second-year students have been coming out rain or shine to take part in a range of bushcraft, ecological and conservation activities, while the Langholm Nursery students loved getting their hands mucky, planting a range of native trees to add some greenery to their outdoor play area! They'll be nurtured in the nursery for the next few years, and once they outgrow their pots will be transplanted out onto the reserve!



Golden Eagles visit Tarras Valley

We have been absolutely delighted that we have had 3 golden eagles from South Of Scotland Golden Eagle Project visiting the Tarras Valley in 2023. This includes two new eagles called Wren and Thomas, and our very own Tarras who was named after the nature reserve.

Wren and Tarras have been translocated from the Highlands in 2021 and Thomas is a chick who has fledged from a nest in Southern Scotland in 2022.

There are no signs of these magnificent birds settling on the reserve or the wider moor at the moment but we are hopeful that they might do in the future.

Carcass cameras are used to help identify any untagged eagles in the area and they are also useful for showing us differences in plumage, progress of moult and feather wear which can help identify individuals from a distance. The carcasses (often deer) and cameras are put out by experienced and licensed SSGEP staff. They are shot with non-lead ammunition as part of ongoing forestry management by Forestry Land Scotland.

All the South Scotland Golden Eagle Project (SSGEP) eagles are hunting for themselves and finding food all across southern Scotland. The food dumps are not permanent and are not intended to supplement eagle diet where prey is limited.



Barn Owl Camera

Following the popularity of our Barn Owl camera last year, we have been busy building some new barn owl boxes to give our resident barn owls a nice accommodation upgrade before nesting season.

To give us a unique insight into the lives of these magnificent birds, we have set up two new cameras to monitor one of our owl pairs. Good signs are that they have already moved into the new boxes and made them home!

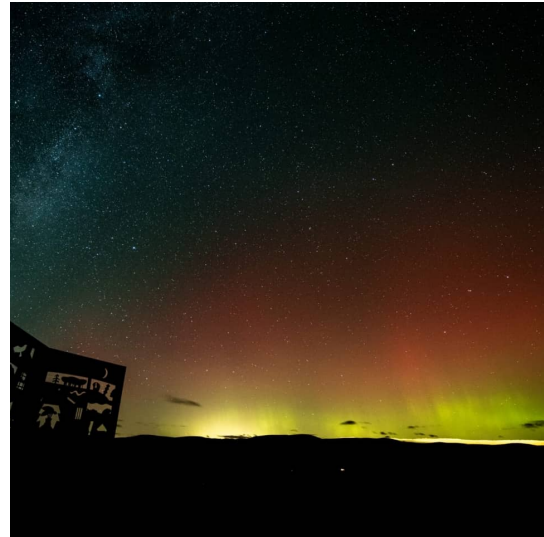
Keep an eye on our social media, where we will hopefully be posting regular updates about the pair over coming months!



Dark Skies

Stunning greens, purples and pinks of the aurora borealis appeared in the night sky across Scotland's night skies earlier this week.

Sadly, in the Tarras Valley due to clouds we missed out this time in seeing this breath taking natural phenomenon, despite a real buzz locally that we might just catch a short glimpse! So, we thought we'd share some snaps of some star trails captured in the last few weeks and a wonderful photo of the aurora in Langholm last year.



Developing Our Action Plan

Over the coming months, that Tarras Valley team are going to be out and about in Langholm and the surrounding areas at events, running school sessions, workshops and community drop-ins to kick start conversations about the future plan for the Tarras Valley.

There are lots of aspirations for the future, we know we can't do it all at once, so it's now about shaping future priorities together so we can make sure this is a sustainable community asset for years to come. If you are interested in any of our events please follow our social media for updates.

Our Year in Review (Webinar)

If you would like to hear more about what we've been up to and what we have planned for the year ahead, please join our Annual Update Webinar at 6-7pm on Tuesday 25th April. You'll hear from the Tarras Valley staff on key projects and work which are in development followed by Q&A.

We hope you can join us!

Follow the link below to book your place.

[April 25th](#)



Tarras Valley Nature Reserve - Annual Update Webinar

Join us for a short webinar to hear about everything that has been happening on the reserve over the past year!

[Book your place](#)

We are a living wage employer!

The Langholm Initiative has recently signed up to be a Living Wage employer – this commits us to ensuring that anyone we employ is paid a minimum of the Living Wage. This is an important part of our ethos as an employer and operating to best practise and we will shortly be displaying the logo. Hopefully this will encourage people we work with to follow suite.

Recent Press Releases



11th November

**Community completes
epic land buyout in
'moment of history and
hope'**



5th August

**Community makes history
as South Scotland's
biggest land buyout gets
over the line to double size
of nature reserve**

[View more](#)

Please follow our social media for further updates about our projects and the work we've been doing.

With all our thanks,

The TVNR team and volunteers

The Langholm Initiative

Buccleuch Mill, Glenesk Road, Langholm
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