



## Wildlife Training Courses on Bennachie

### Information

### Introduction

The Bailies of Bennachie have been awarded grant from the players of the People's Postcode Lottery to train local people in wildlife survey and recording.

The Bailies are keen to encourage local people who want to improve their wildlife identification skills and who are willing to submit records of their wildlife encounters on Bennachie. So, in 2017 we are running a programme providing opportunities to learn more about surveying and recording mammals, birds and plants.

**Public events** - We will be holding events open to everyone during the year which we'll publicise in local papers and on our Facebook page.

**Training courses** - We have special opportunities for members to participate more fully in wildlife recording on Bennachie. We are offering in-depth training courses to teach you how to identify and record mammals (10 days), birds (12 half days) and plants/vegetation (6 days). The training courses are for adults (over 18) who are physically able to walk several kilometres over rough terrain.

**Trail cameras** – the Bailies have several trail cameras to loan to members prepared to look after the cameras, set up them up on Bennachie, regularly check what they find and submit the wildlife records. We will train people how to use the cameras to record wildlife.

If you want to help the Bailies us find out more about the wildlife on Bennachie then please fill in the application form which can be found on our website. We have not agreed all the dates with the trainers yet, but if you are interested we will let you know them as soon as they are confirmed with the trainers.

## Training in identification and recording to the Mammals of Bennachie

### Dates

The course starts on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March 1000-1600. Both days will start in Monymusk Village Hall and continuing outdoors. Max of 10 days. The other dates are not fixed yet but will be confirmed soon.

### Course Content

This course will include

- an introduction to mammals found in the Bennachie area (indoors)
- advice on the most useful books to use to help identify mammals (indoors)
- an introduction to where and how to submit your wildlife records (indoors)
- an introduction to tracking and tracking fieldwork (indoors and outdoors)
- an introduction to using trail cameras (indoors and outdoors)
- a series of events on selected species – otters, pine martens, badgers, bats, wild cats, squirrels, deer (indoors and outdoors) The dates of these events are still to be confirmed.

### Tutors

The tutors for the first weekend are Lizzie Bacon and Willow Lohr.

Lizzie Bacon - Lizzie been involved in otter conservation most of her working life starting as Conservation Officer and Education Officer for the Otter Trust, moving on to the Cumbria Wildlife Trust and latterly conducting surveys for SNH. She has written the species account on otters for the new Mammal Atlas for North East Scotland. Lizzie is a qualified primary teacher and has helped to promote, develop and support Forest Schools throughout Aberdeenshire participating in CPD for teachers on outdoor learning and writing resources. She is an experienced wildlife tracker and has achieved the Track and Sign, Level 3, Cybertracker qualification.

Willow Lohr - Willow is Scotland's leading freelance bushcraft instructor who teaches rangers, outdoor leaders, forest schools and survival enthusiasts. She was one of the first in the UK to earn the same prestigious international tracking qualifications as Lizzie. She is highly skilled in a variety of indigenous arts and crafts which she has taught herself.

*Other tutors TBC (Eric Jensen- badgers, deer, bats, wild cat, squirrels)*

**Participants** - must be able to walk on rough ground for up to 5km and have suitable waterproof, warm clothing and stout footwear for outdoors. A hand lens, notebook and mobile phone/camera would be useful.

Participants should bring their own food and snacks for the day.

## Training in identification and recording of birds on Bennachie

### Dates

The course will start on 18<sup>th</sup> March. 100-1600. Dates will be confirmed soon. The course will last approx. for 12 half days, mainly mornings and some evenings.

### Course content

This course will include

- introduction to the birds on Bennachie
- basic training in identification techniques and common pitfalls.
- where to get help with identifying birds
- introduction to bird surveys - methods and techniques
- surveying and recording the birds on Bennachie
- some fieldwork sessions will require early starts before dawn, and one or two sessions may involve evening visits for species like owls and woodcock

### Tutor

John Wills - a retired professional geologist background, with many years of first birdwatching and then bird surveying experience. Participant in BTO Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) of Loch of Skene since 1997, BTO's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) near Inch since 1999, local bird surveys for Scottish Ornithologists Club (SOC), and contract walk-over and goose watches for a number of potential windfarm sites from Angus to Caithness (2001-2009). Summer volunteer at RSPB sites Islay and Abernethy Forest. Past chairman and current branch secretary for North East Scotland branch of SOC.

Secretary and treasurer of North Sea Bird Club (an oil-industry sponsored offshore recording scheme for offshore workers).

**Participants** - you will need to be reasonably fit and able to walk approx. 6 to 8 km per session over trails and rough ground (heather moorland). You will need good walking boots, standard waterproof outdoor clothing, rucksack, binoculars, notebook or recording cards, map(s) and mobile phone. A trekking pole, first-aid kit, field guide and hand-held GPS unit will also be useful, so please bring them you have them. Participants should bring their own food and snacks for the day.

## **Training in identification and recording of plants and vegetation on Bennachie.**

James Mackay was one of the founder members who formed the Bailies of Bennachie in 1972. Sadly, he passed away in 2016 but he left a legacy to the Bailies. James mapped the vegetation on Bennachie in 19xx. The Bailies are using the legacy he gifted to repeat this survey and honour his outstanding work on Bennachie.

### **Dates**

The course will start on May 6th. It will last approx. 6 days through spring and summer.

### **Course content**

The course will include

- an introduction to the plants and vegetation on Bennachie
- an introduction to identifying and recording plants
- an introduction to classifying and mapping vegetation
- Fieldwork on identifying and recording plants (the course will cover higher plants only, it will not cover mosses, lichens and fungi)
- fieldwork mapping the vegetation
- submitting records to the recording schemes

### **Tutor**

David Bale - David is a life-time conservationist and worked for Scottish Natural Heritage based in Aberdeen for nearly three decades, latterly as the Area Manager for Grampian and Tayside Area.

**Participants** - you will need to be physically able to walk 5km over rough ground. For the fieldwork you will need appropriate outdoor clothing including good boots, waterproofs, rucksack, a notebook, and a mobile phone. Plant ID guides and a hand lens will be useful to. Participants should bring their own food and snacks for the day.

## Trail Cameras

### Dates

Cameras will be available in March, with initial training on the mammals days at the beginning of March. There will be another day in April/May on using trail cameras.

### Course Content

The course will include

- Training in use of cameras
- Cameras and the law
- Identifying the images and submitting the records, where to get help
- Using trail cameras to record small mammals

### Tutors

The tutors will include Rose Toney a camera expert who runs the North East Biodiversity Partnership, Nick Littlewood an expert in recording small mammals with trail cameras and Glenn Roberts, the co-ordinator of the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre.

**Participants** - need to be willing to look after a camera for a minimum of 3 months, locate the camera in an agreed location on Bennachie, visit the camera once a week, download the images, report their findings, share the best images on agreed Facebook pages. The camera may be located in a remote spot in rough terrain so participants need to be able confident about walking on such ground.