

## P02: Hazelwood Audit



### Project Overview:

To identify the extent, location and condition of hazel woods remaining in Assynt and Coigach. To locate and survey major stands of hazel and to investigate existing and historic management. To investigate and discuss management options and threats to the woods. We will search existing records and databases and consult with Atlantic Hazel Action Group and others.

**Project lead organisation and other organisations involved:** Assynt Field Club

**Project location:** Throughout Coigach and Assynt

**Project dates:** April 2017 - March 2018

### Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Audit of entire project area	1	1	Report published on AFC and CALL websites
Management options investigated with land managers & Elaine MacAskill	12	12	Funding not yet available. Some sites have management options more fully delivered, advice given to Nature Scot also.
Volunteers come to help with survey and learn about it. Also came to meetings to discuss methodology	20	21	Volunteers for steering groups, survey, bioblitz and family days
Field trips	2	3	Practice lichen identification day on 3/11/2018 with participants after training course. Also again December 2019 and other dates
School trips	2	2	17/5/2018 and 19/9/2018
Family event	1	1	Information stall at craft day in Lochinver 6/4/18 with slide
Illustrated talk delivered to Assynt Field Club	1	1	14/12/17
Illustrated talk given to Highland Biodiversity Conference Inverness		1	21/4/18
Leaflets produced and distributed	1	2	6/4/18 and 2019

### Scheme Outputs

How has the project contributed to the CALLP Scheme Outcomes:

Y	1. The key features of the Assynt and Coigach Landscape will better understood and management options discussed. <a href="#">Guidelines</a>
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	for ongoing management of hazel was discussed with the land managers.
Y	2. Where appropriate the connectivity and biodiversity of selected habitats will be surveyed and mapped. Core hazel woods identified and mapped, and rare lichen identified within the woodlands
Y	3. Increased awareness and understanding amongst all individuals and groups of what makes Assynt and Coigach special and the threats to the unique heritage. Public events and discussions with land managers raised awareness
Y	4. Important elements of the built, cultural and natural heritage will be recorded, improved, made publicly accessible and celebrated by the local community. Hazel woods in Assynt recorded and found to be nationally significant.
	5. People will have gained new skills in researching, restoring and understanding their heritage.
Y	6. Collected data, information and interpretation will be more accessible in the public domain including posting on appropriate websites. Hazel report available on Assynt Field Club and CALLP website
	7. Local groups and individuals understand, enjoy, value and take action in the Coigach and Assynt area in ways they did not at the outset.

### Reflecting on the last 5 years, what's the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of CALLP?

Previously it was thought that the core hazel wood area was in Argyll. However the project has identified core areas of hazel in Assynt that rival areas in Argyll, extending the recognised extent of Scotland's Rain Forest. The project has enabled greater understanding of the very high value of the Atlantic hazel component of Scotland's Rainforest in Assynt and Coigach.

### What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of Coigach and Assynt?

The project allows:

- Hazel woods to continue to be investigated and necessary management discussed to help protect and/or restore existing hazel stands
- Biological records to continue to be collected and added to national archives
- Report published on Assynt Field Club and CALL websites

### What difference has this project made to people?

The project has:

- Improved awareness, understanding and appreciation of the area's hazel woods
- Improved condition of the area's hazel woods
- Those owning areas of hazel have become more aware of the management and ecology of hazel woods
- General public have become more aware of hazel woods

*“thank you for a wonderful afternoon. My husband and I really enjoyed it. It was great to meet such knowledgeable and enthusiastic people. The lichens were particularly amazing and I was delighted to find Pseudocyphellaria crocata, which I have been searching for many years. I wish you great success with the future of the Atlantic hazel project” Eleanor Gordon, Fife*

*“I read about your Hazel survey in the SWT magazine and followed it up on your website. What a great project, finding these ancient trees all around the wetlands of Assynt.” Neil*

## Useful Links

[Hazel Wood Audit - Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape \(coigach-assynt.org\)](http://coigach-assynt.org)

[Atlantic Hazel Audit of Assynt and Coigach \(2017-18\) - Assynt Field Club \(assyntwildlife.org.uk\)](http://assyntwildlife.org.uk)

## Future Plans

The future plans for the project are:

- Continued mapping of Atlantic Hazel Woodland in Assynt and Coigach
- Continued input into National Lichen Database
- DNA testing on some hazel ‘rings’
- Long term studies on stem girth and growth
- Possibility of red squirrel survival in the area

## Lessons learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. In particular the extent of Assynt hazel woods is much greater and more valuable than previously thought.
2. A greater understanding of the biodiversity of hazel trees
3. A greater understanding of the resilience of these trees in response to storm events which are increasing with climate change
4. A greater understanding of the necessity of well-managed hazel to our ancestors

What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Great losses to the specific habitat, trees, plant, lichen and fungal species have been caused by wildfires.
2. Cutting hazel for firewood is very destructive. Cutting hazel for crafts if the person cannot recognise internationally important lichens is very destructive in this area.
3. Sheep and horse grazing can kill ancient hazels.

## Funding Partners



## Photographic evidence

All photos Roz Summers



Achmelvich Giant – still vigorous 840cm girth



New hazel seedlings (deer fenced)



Re-enacting the Clachtoll broch destruction c.2000 years ago. Brian Wilson helped Ullapool S1 make a heather thatch. Note the bent hazel pegs holding on the hazel struts (arrow). Many of the children wanted a hazel stick to take home.