

P08 Natural Heritage Data Project



Project Overview:

The aim is to create a modern, vibrant website improving public access to large quantities of currently inaccessible natural heritage data. By showcasing and interpreting the landscapes and natural heritage of Assynt, this website will enhance the appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of this area for all users and encourage further input of data and records from users. The website will have the capacity to collect and store more data and it is hoped this new data will enhance and add to the available information, helping to build a better picture of the Assynt landscape and how it is changing. This data can then be used to input into future land management decisions.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Assynt Field Club (AFC)

Project location: Assynt

Project dates: Aug 2016 – Dec 2020

Project outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
An upgraded Assynt Field Club website	1	1	New website went 'live' on 1-1-17
Transfer to the new website of all existing information and images	100%	100%	6724 records were transferred to the new AFC website (covering Oct. 2009 to Dec. 2016) but not to the Assynt Community Digital Archive (ACDA) – this part of the project became impossible to deliver due to unavailability of the ACDA. The funds allocated to this part were transferred to a species mapping project.
Incorporation on the new website of a data capture system to transfer information to regional and national databases, including the National Biodiversity Network	1	1	Sightings can now be sent to AFC in a variety of ways including the online reporting form incorporated into the website; social media; email; text; verbally and even on paper. All sightings submitted to us are collated annually on species spreadsheets. These are then uploaded to the website and disseminated to appropriate databases.
All existing information files on website & ACDA	1		Unable to accomplish as the ACDA has not been accessible during the project period. However, data is now publicly available online, where previously it was held by numerous private individuals.
AFC members have enhanced computer skills	6	7	Computer training for additional 4 on 15th & 16th Dec 20 with a further one person added during July 2021.

Volunteer days	309	558.8	As the site and other projects progressed the volunteer time required greatly exceeded our initial estimate.
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Scheme outputs

How has the project contributed to the CALLP Scheme Outcomes:

	1. The key features of the Coigach and Assynt Landscape will be better understood and restored with a fit for purpose system in place to ensure the benefits are sustained.
	2. Where appropriate the connectivity and diversity of selected habitats will be mapped.
	3. Increased awareness and understanding amongst all individuals and groups of what makes Coigach and Assynt special and the threats to the unique heritage.
Y	4. Important elements of the built, cultural and natural heritage will be recorded, improved, made publically accessible and celebrated by the local community. 48642 wildlife records previously held by private individuals have been collated and processed for inclusion on spreadsheets. These records are now publicly available on our website on downloadable spreadsheets.
Y	5. People will have gained new skills in researching, restoring and understanding their heritage. Five Assynt Field Club members have now received training in the management of the website and will be able to support the website beyond the legacy period.
	6. Collected data, information and interpretation will be more accessible in the public domain including posting on appropriate websites. As at 31 Dec. 2019 the total number of wildlife records held on our website was 75415. The data for 2020 has been collated but is not yet integrated onto the spreadsheets. 2021 is amassing at this time.
Y	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. As we are receiving an increased number of records, and by various methods it is clear that more people are becoming aware of our website and Assynt's natural heritage. In addition, it is likely that people feel more willing to submit their records in the knowledge that they are contributing to an already substantial resource.
	8. Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the area.
	9. Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits.

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?

One thing leads to another!

Simply the creation and launch of our new website, thanks to CALLP funding was a great source of pride.

However, the one thing that greatly increased the sense of purpose and achievement was the additional wildlife projects the new site spawned, e.g. [Sounds of Nature Project](#), [Quinag Wildlife Project](#), [Wildlife Mapping Project](#). These additional projects are now well developed and easily accessible on our website.

Again, AFC would not have been in a position to deliver these if we had not been part of the CALLP.

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

The project has allowed in excess of 50000 previously unavailable wildlife and habitat records and images, etc. to be freely accessible to anyone who has an interest in Assynt's natural heritage.

It has also provided inspiration to others who had wished to improve their own wildlife identification, recording and appreciation. This is a very important aspect of our project as our natural heritage needs future generations that will understand and care for their environment.

What difference has this project made to people?

Those involved in delivering this project have acquired new skills with regards to online presentation of data and the behind the scenes operation of a natural heritage focused website.

Others have developed their writing and interpretation skills to suit the needs of a modern natural history website which is accessible and can be of use to all.

Users of our website now have a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of the variety and complexity of the landscape they live in or are visiting. With the addition of our recent 'Sounds of Nature' project we are attempting to make some of that variety available to those with a visual impairment or are otherwise not able to physically access it.

Some comments we have received from website users –

"You are doing brilliantly. Although I live just South of Inverness, I love Assynt and come often but just haven't been on any of your outings. I really appreciate your use of the internet to spread knowledge and enthusiasm. Well Done" [S. Murray Sep. 2016]

“Although I am not around very much, I enjoy reading all of the things that come through from the Field Club. I think that the new website is really great & also follow the entries on Facebook too.” [L. Burns May 2019]

“I am the commissioning editor for The Royal Society scientific journal, Philosophical Transactions B. We are looking for a photograph of yellow dung flies mating for use on the cover of a theme issue of our journal, and found the one on the page <https://www.assyntwildlife.org.uk/2015/10/yellow-dung-flies/> (left hand image) which would ideal. Is there any way that you can put me in touch with D. Haines who the photo is credited to?” [H. Eaton Aug. 2020]

“I was visiting the AFC website and found all those lovely wildlife recordings on the Sounds of Nature page. Would it be OK for me to share those on social media? I particularly love the stags – perfect sounds of autumn!” [S. Walker Nov. 2020]

Useful Links

www.assyntwildlife.org.uk

Future Plans and Legacy

At the time of writing there are two ongoing projects which will add new interest and information to the website in the coming months and years.

One, the ‘Sounds of Nature’ project will add ongoing wildlife sound recordings for the foreseeable future.

Secondly, Wildlife Sightings will, through volunteer effort, continue to be processed and added to the existing website spreadsheets (see Project Outputs). That data will also allow us to update species maps (see Project Outputs).

The information gained as a result of this project has already allowed us to create interactive online maps showing the distribution of several species categories. We now also have a software package that allows us to create these maps in a form suitable for inclusion in printed information leaflets.

One such leaflet concerning butterflies has already been created and can be viewed and printed for free directly from the website. [Butterflies of Assynt Booklet](#)

We currently have no follow up projects planned. However, as mentioned earlier this website project has already led to several other projects being developed and delivered.

We very much hope that the website's legacy will be the data stored on it and the availability of the data to anyone with an interest in, or a curiosity about the wildlife, landscape and natural heritage of Assynt.

Lessons learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Projects such as ours can actually be developed and delivered with expert advice and support provided by those employed to/concerned with, the delivery of the scheme. Without such support, it is virtually impossible to imagine how we would have achieved our desires.
2. Funding provided by such schemes is vital if small rural communities have a desire to record, interpret, enhance or protect their unique 'environments'.
3. Such schemes give groups or individuals the confidence to deliver ideas or plans they have been wishing they could set in motion but lacked the know-how or funding to do so.

What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

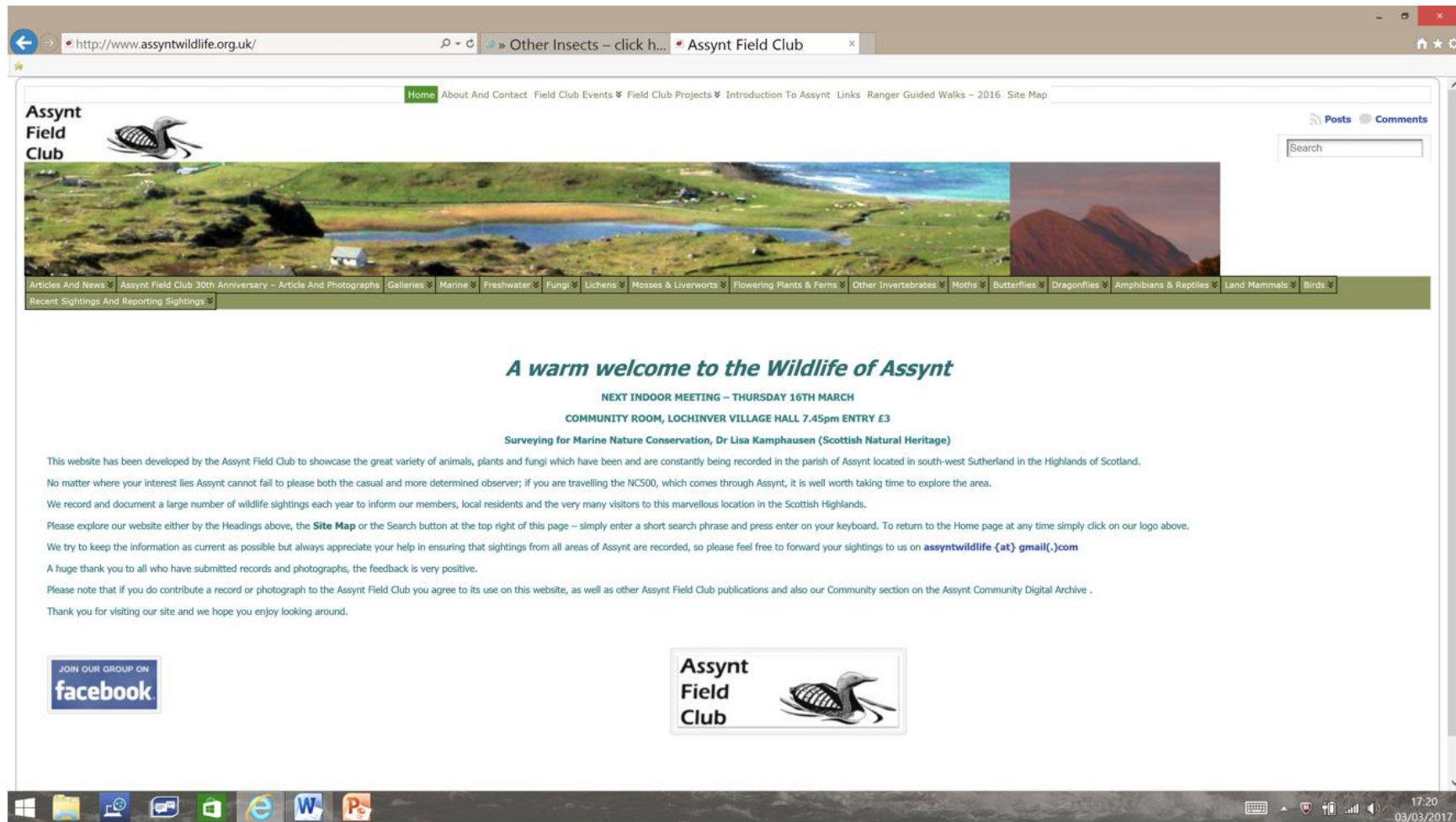
1. Some members of the community resent such funding schemes.
2. Obtaining three tenders for some projects creates a frustration in those trying to deliver their project and can also cause time delays.
3. Occasional breakdown in administrative matters within the scheme, e.g. invoice payment, becomes stressful for project members when they have had no previous involvement with the admin of the scheme.

Funding Partners

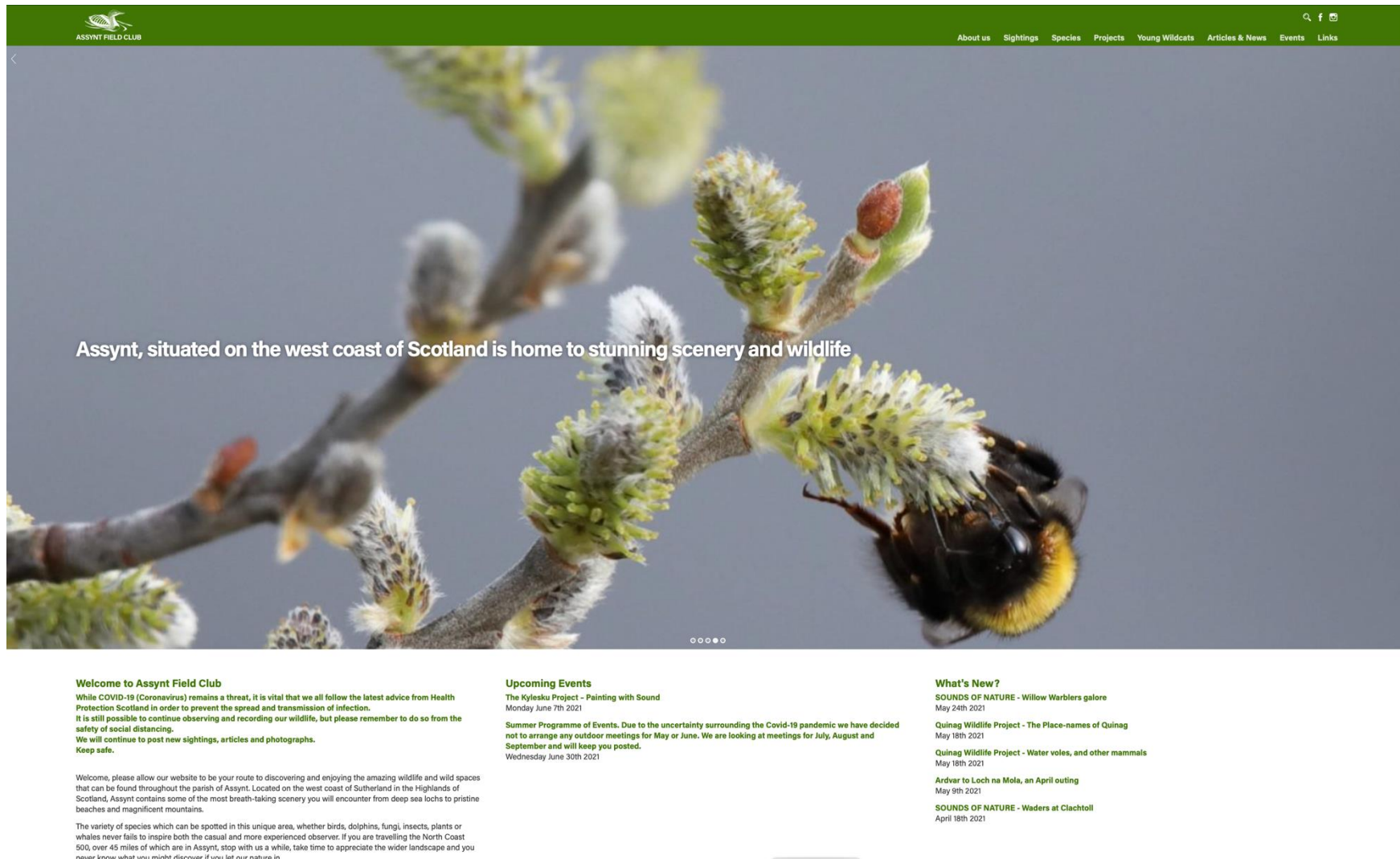


Photographic evidence

Final homepage of original website ©Assynt Field Club



Homepage of current website (1) ©Assynt Field Club



Homepage of current website (2) ©Assynt Field Club

We record and document a large number of wildlife sightings every year and each and every one helps enhance the knowledge and understanding of the nature of Assynt. You too can play a part in this by simply sending us your sightings either via the reporting form on this page or by email.

Whether you just want to browse our site, plan a visit or make use of the increasing amount of [raw data](#) which is now available you are sure to find something of interest, and we hope that you will visit us again to discover more of Assynt's wildlife.

Recent Sightings

Harbour Porpoise
Four sightings off Bay of Stoer (DAH) (29/05)

Sedge Warbler
Three birds audible from 'The Jammy' Culkein Stoer (DAH) (28/05)

Speckled Wood Butterfly
Two butterflies in woods below Drumbeg viewpoint (AS) (28/05)

Large Red Damselfly
Several damselflies recently emerged at Drumbeg (AS) (28/05)

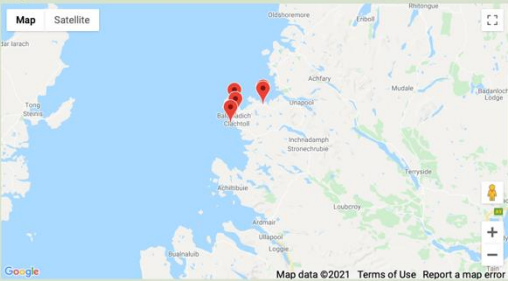
Blackcap
Two birds singing at Drumbeg (AS) (28/05)

Little Grebe
Two birds nest building, Loch Neil Bhain (DAH) (28/05)

Teal
Three birds (2 male, 1 female) Loch Neil Bhain (DAH) (28/05)

More

Map



Report a Sighting - Assynt only

Sightings outwith Assynt cannot be used

Name

Email

What did you see?

How many?

Where did you see it?


Please if possible give a grid reference

Date of Sighting e.g. (dd/mm/yyyy)

Other relevant details

Do you have photographs, if so may we contact you?

Recaptcha

☐ I'm not a robot 

Submit

Galleries



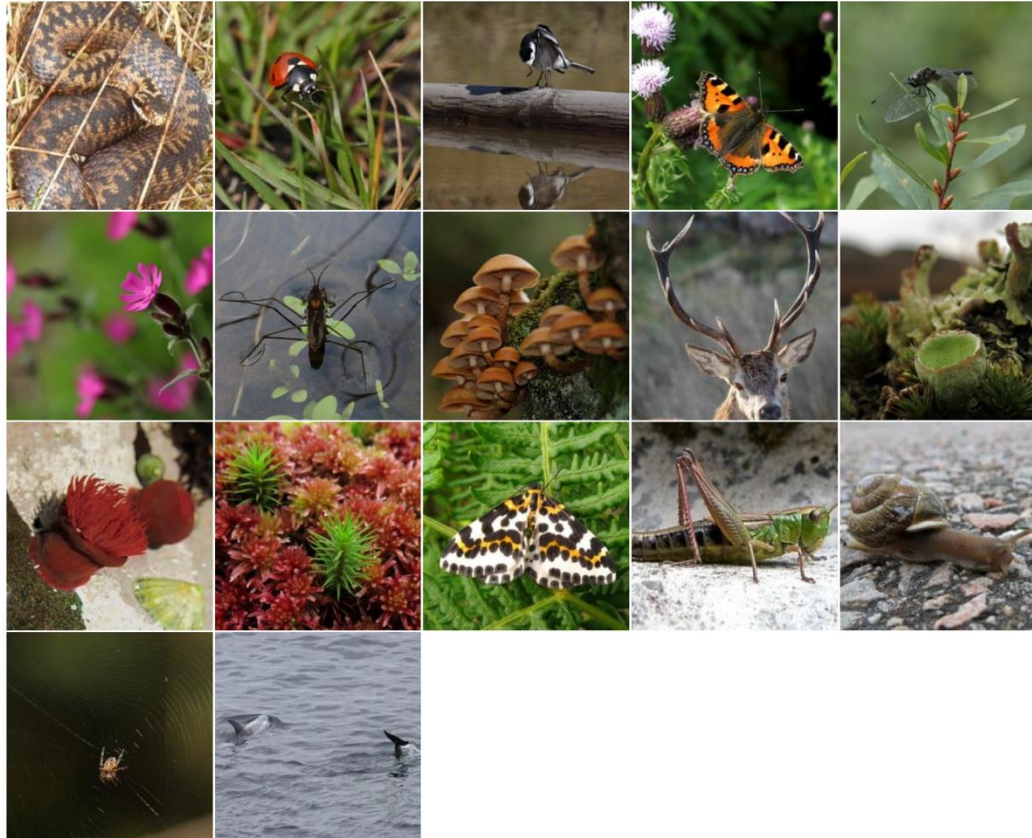
Like us on Facebook



Screenshot

Homepage of current website (3) ©Assynt Field Club

Galleries



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This project is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage.



Coigach & Assynt
LIVING LANDSCAPE

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Contact Assynt Field Club
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Membership

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Screenshot