



THE WILD PLANT CONSERVATION CHARITY
Registered Charity No 1059559

A Report for the Nineveh Charitable Trust

Saving Scotland's Rainforest: New Lower Plant Specialist

Plantlife Scotland is joint lead partner with the Woodland Trust Scotland in the **Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest (ASR)**. This voluntary partnership is the voice of Scotland's rainforest, made up of NGOs, statutory bodies and other stakeholders to ensure a collaborative, landscape approach to saving and protecting this fragile and unique habitat. In 2021, The Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest partnership launched a short film: Scotland's Rainforest <https://savingscotlandsrainforest.org.uk>. This explains why the temperate rainforest habitat that we find along Scotland's west coast is so important from the perspective of the people that live and work there. It's not just the globally important assemblages of mosses, liverworts and lichens that blanket every surface within these woodlands that makes them worth restoring, but their importance to local people. They create jobs, support livelihoods and provide places to enjoy. Within 24 hours more than 14,000 people had watched it; there was an excellent response from press and media and social media also.

In August 2021, the Nineveh Charitable Trust kindly awarded £3,000 towards a Lower Plant Specialist post for Saving Scotland's Rainforest project. With sufficient funds in place from a number of Trusts and a successful appeal to Plantlife supporters, we recruited Dr Oliver Moore in August 2021. Oliver has a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to bring to this role. He is an expert (and enthusiast) on bryophytes and lichens, he is used to collaborating with different stakeholders, knows the Scottish rainforest area well and has led many field trips and training workshops. He is the Vice County recorder of bryophytes in mid-Perthshire and also records lichens for the British Lichen Society.



Mossy oakwood at Ariundle NNR Ardnamurchan West Highland Area © Lorne Gill

Oliver has been working over the last 10 months to start:

- Engaging with key groups of land managers;
- Identifying the needs and raise awareness of the bryophytes and lichens of Scotland's rainforests;
- Identifying solutions and action needed to address threats;
- Providing specialist advice and developing and delivering training to land managers, owners, rangers and other interested parties;
- Establishing a set of minimum management standards in collaboration with the ASR Monitoring and Management Delivery Group;
- Delivering surveys, assessments, and recommendations;
- Investigating current habitat condition assessments;
- Thinking about a minimum standard for rainforest monitoring that aligns with what other ASR partners are developing.

Feedback from a training event for National Trust for Scotland staff, emphasizes the effectiveness of Oliver's work:

"A great day yesterday! Many thanks to Oliver for his boundless enthusiasm and incredible level of knowledge and ability to share it!" Dan Watson

"Thanks Oliver, it was an excellent course. I don't think I'll be the next lichen expert, but you've certainly inspired me to go and have a closer look at some of ours, and to consider lichens in our management." Kate Sampson

"Oliver just to echo Kate's comments... The thinking points in relation to management were really helpful, and very useful guidance to throw into our plans for woodland restoration and expansion across properties. It was the most engaging course I've ever had on bryophytes, and the first time I've come away from one with confidence about being able to ID them and understand something of what they tell us about the habitats in our care." Alasdair Eckersall

Lichens and bryophytes are one of the most neglected taxa. Conservation efforts most often being directed towards more 'charismatic' species. There are 2,000 species of lichens and 1,000 bryophytes native to the UK, compared to 250 breeding bird species, 66 mammals, and 1400 flowering plants, yet they draw in a tiny percentage of conservation funding (Nineveh Charitable Trust would have been one of very few funders supporting lichens and bryophytes last year). Those with the specialist knowledge to protect them are as rare as some of the lichen and bryophyte species themselves, with roughly only 10 staff posts (including Oliver's) dedicated to lichens and bryophytes in the UK. We are therefore, exceptionally grateful that you provided funding for this work, which ensured that there was a dedicated specialist post addressing the needs of lichens and bryophytes in Scotland's rainforest.

Next steps

Our plan is to retain Oliver, the Saving Scotland's Rainforest Lichens and Bryophytes Advisor, for another year. Doing this is critical to the ASR's efforts to raise the profile of the lichens and bryophytes of Scotland's rainforest and secure both the legacy of these species and the rainforest habitat as a whole.

To secure valuable outcomes, build capacity, reach those working across the rainforest zone, and create a legacy, Oliver needs time to develop his findings and build on work from his initial year. Over the next 12 months Oliver will:

- Continue to engage with key groups, raise awareness, and provide specialist advice to land managers, reaching a larger area;
- Develop best practice management standards for habitat quality in Scotland's rainforest;
- Produce management guidance that addresses the needs of bryophytes and lichens having sort wider ASR endorsement for what the minimum standards should be;
- Develop content to provide support and advice to land managers;
- Support development of landscape scale projects. The ASR has a programme of landscape scale projects that are in development that will rely on the specialist knowledge, capacity and advice of this post. Therefore, funding this post will help ensure that any projects deliver fully for lichen and bryophytes and will help lever in funding to ensure best practice on the ground conservation work.

- Carry out more surveys across the rainforest zone and map areas more accurately so we can prioritise how we can link-up isolated stands of remnant rainforest with new woodland creation schemes;
- Develop and agree minimum standards for habitat condition monitoring in Scotland's rainforest to inform adaptive management.
- Continue to deliver training that helps people involved with rainforest management to carry out monitoring and take action to protect what we have whilst trying to expand and connect remnant stands of this rare habitat.
- Explore the development of an app that allows woodland managers to record information in the field, and provide management advice based on the results of monitoring;
- Support volunteering through workshops and events and examine how we could use citizen science to help with habitat condition assessments.

With many thanks