

Map of Firth of Clyde – West Loch halfway down on extreme left in remote area of Argyll. Note Glasgow conurbation to east



# Action West Loch

## Background.

Back in the summer of 2021 Carina and I had bought a house plot in South Knapdale to be near our 40 acre wood (Ferry Wood – acquired in 2016)) – our address then was halfway down the Kintyre peninsula, but we wanted to be near the wood. We knew it would take till the end of 2022 to build the house and move 30 miles there but in the meantime we had made friends on the shores of the West Loch and were wanting to set up a group to protect ecosystems both on land and in the water. We went ahead and did this (see cycle 1).

The group grew and we started to look at funding possibilities to help us. I took the lead in rainforest restoration, contacted Rewilding Britain and succeeded in getting funding from them to explore the possibility of setting up a Deer Management Group to monitor/ survey deer movements across the South Knapdale area by involving all the landowners, land managers and stalkers in the area. The project started in January 2023 (Cycle 2).

Also we were starting to build a programme of events to get more folk involved and grow the group. We have already run three events this year – one of which meant bringing in the Saving Scotland's Rainforest expert Oliver Moore over for 4 days. This resulted in the discovery of a beautiful area of fairly intact rainforest with some species not previously recorded in South Knapdale. The deer management project took on a different emphasis, altering how it was initially envisaged (instead of a focus on holding meetings it turned into a series of conversations and the building of relationships (Cycle 3).

# Leaflet for Ferry Wood (published 2019)



# Fàilte

Ferry Wood is a very special oak woodland: a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its lichens, mosses, liverworts and ferns. Look at how they cover the trunks, branches and rocks, indicating you are in a Temperate Rainforest.

Restoring the wood has meant us putting up a deer fence. This stops the deer and sheep nibbling the many young saplings of birch, hazel, rowan, holly and willow that once formed the “shrub” layer below the oak canopy.

We are also clearing rhododendron because it is choking out the native plants and creating a very limited ecosystem consisting of rhododendron, oaks and little else. Note the “lever and mulch” method of clearing it (involving digging out the whole plant) rather than cutting and spraying.

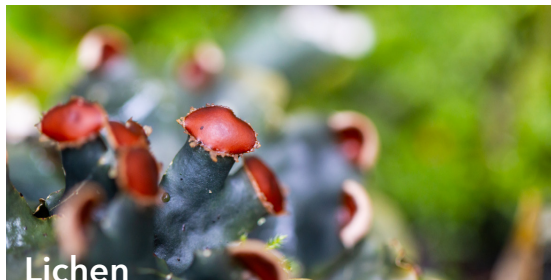
You are welcome to walk in the wood. Gates are marked on the map. There are no specific paths so feel free to wander, take care on uneven ground and be aware of steep drops. Check for ticks afterwards.

You are welcome to take part in our free activity days on making biochar/charcoal, foraging and scything.

Check out our Ferry Wood Group (Facebook) and [www.bioregioning.com](http://www.bioregioning.com).

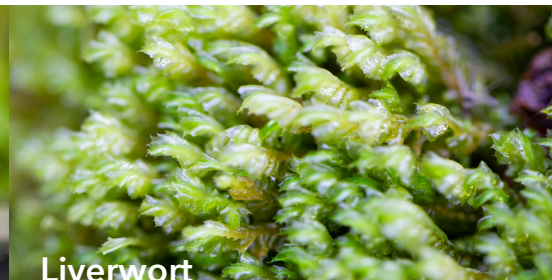
Text 07799 898369 for further information.

Activities are run by Local Bioregioning CIC.



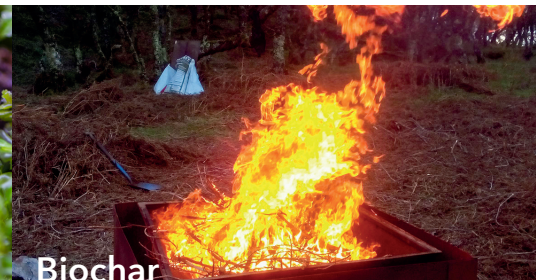
**Lichen**

*Peltigera horizontalis*: ancient woodland indicator - specimen on rock



**Liverwort**

*Plagiochila spinulosa*: very oceanic and for which this area is globally important - specimen on rock



**Biochar**

Making biochar in our custom made kiln

# Leaflet for Ferry Wood – site maps



Ferry Wood,  
Ardpatrick, off the B8024,  
Knapdale,  
PA29 6YA

[www.bioregioning.com](http://www.bioregioning.com)

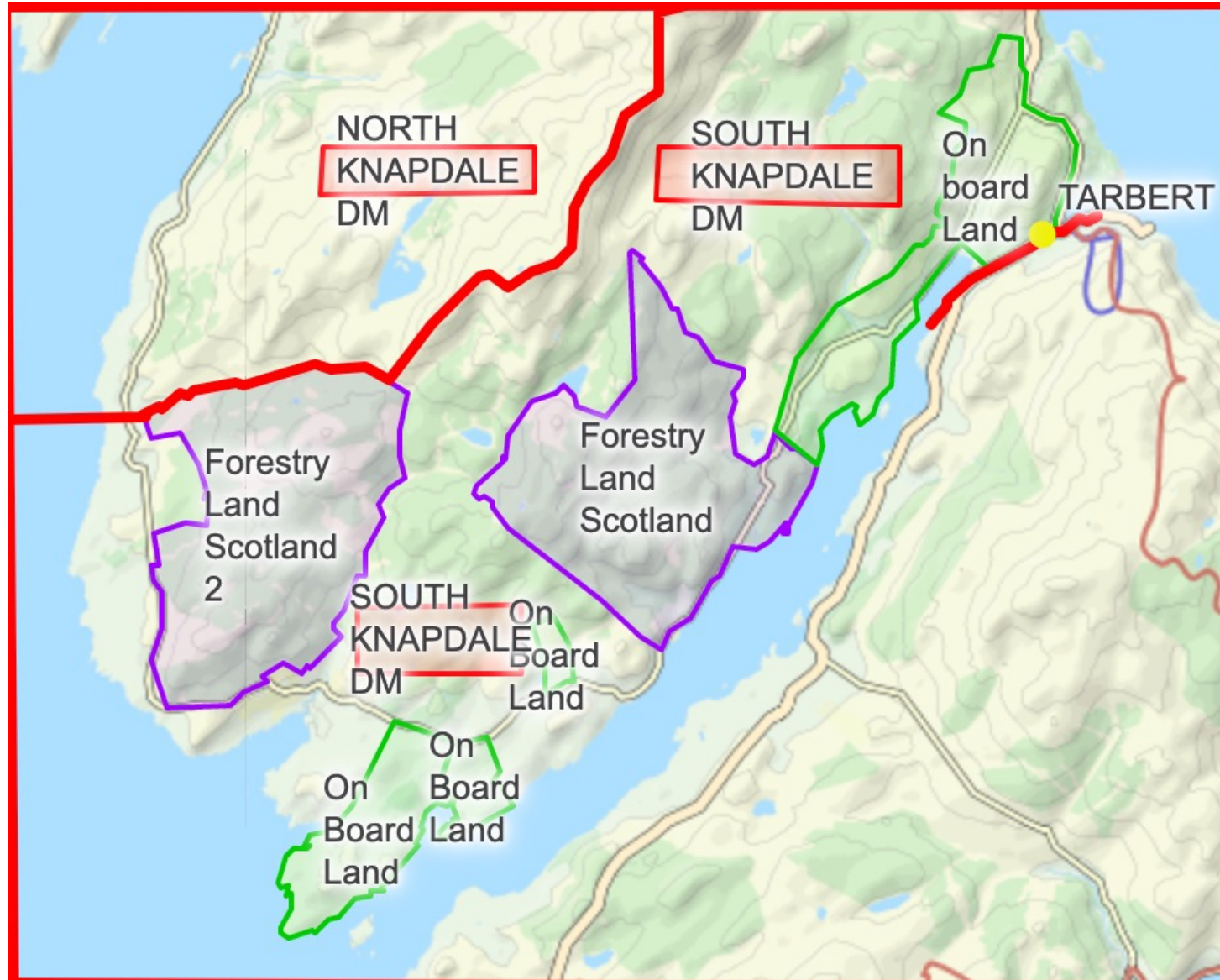
Activities are run by Local Bioregioning CIC.

**local**  
[www.local.org](http://www.local.org)

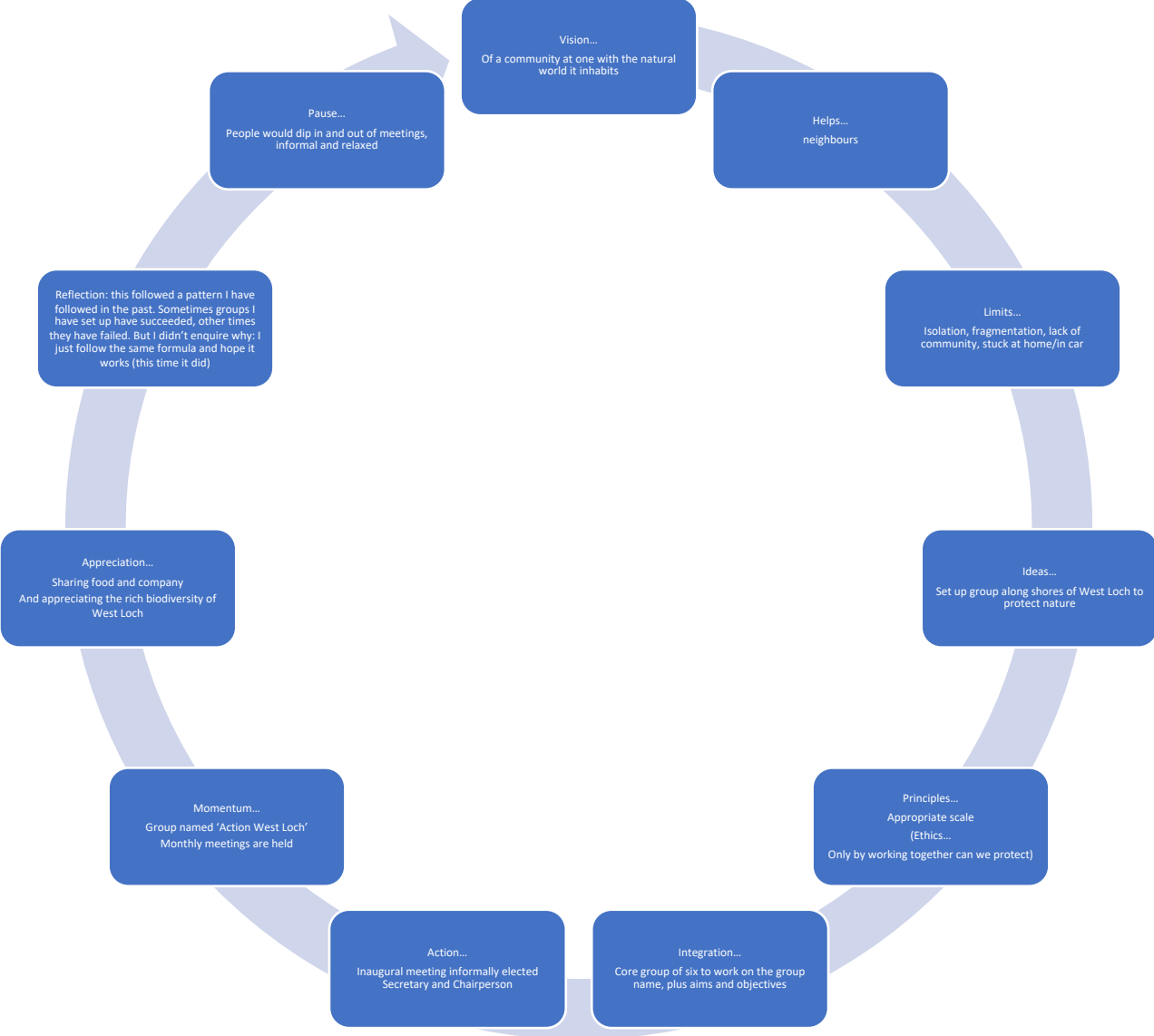
**Ferry Wood**

- Wood boundary
- Fence
- Gate
- Kiln

# South Knapdale deer management project area – also area of hoped-for rainforest restoration 2023



# Cycle no. 1 – AWL Summer 2021 - 2022



# Discovering a new area of rainforest beside Cuildrynoch burn only 200m. from house March 2023

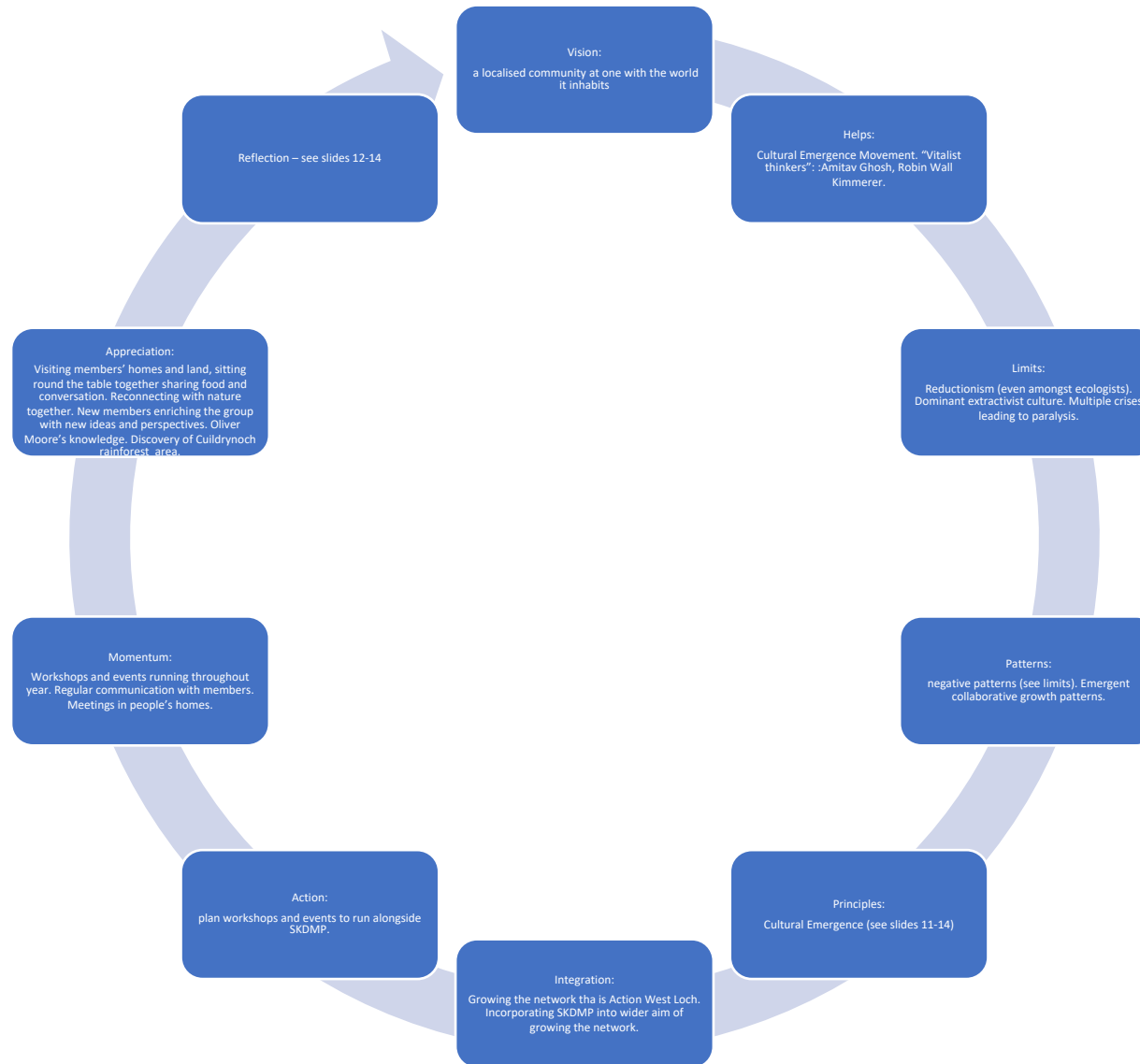


# Cycle no. 2 Funding Application for South Knapdale Deer Management Project September-December 2022-3





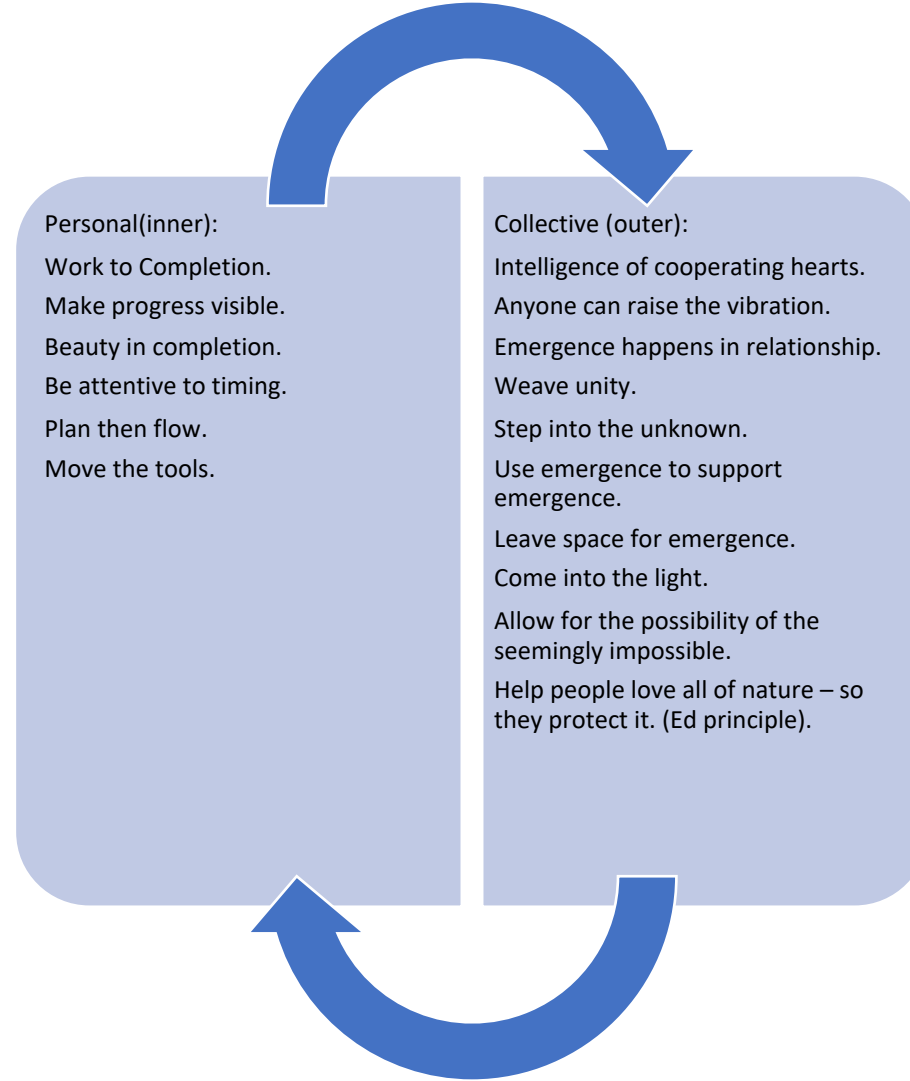
# Cycle 3 - Cultural Emergence in AWL - January 2023 onwards



Oliver Moore of Plantlife Scotland showing us burnside liverworts – March 2023



## Cultural Emergence principles (Looby Macnamara) being used in Cycle no. 3



## Reflections on the 3 cycles

This design was written in Spring of 2023. I had already been through the design web cycle twice and wrote these up retrospectively (cycles 1 and 2). In doing so I realized I had followed the cycle consistently in a clockwise direction. However, the third cycle is currently in progress. Seeing that something new and interesting was going on I thought I would write this up as it is at the emergent phase. Below are my reflections on the 3 cycles (focus on the principles used in each).

### No.1 – Setting up Action West Loch:

Principle: working at the appropriate scale. I had tried and failed with 3 others to set up Bioregion Clyde – too big 40% of the whole of the Scottish population, full of wicked problems. But at the same time I was seeing growth and flow with Action West Loch – only 2,000 people living along its shores.

### No.2 – Deer Management Project set up (to January 2023):

Principles – all of Holmgren plus any others that are nature-mimetic: you look at how nature works from an ecological perspective, determine the principles and apply these to your design. I did this, working out the twin threats to the rainforest – rhododendron and overgrazing by deer (preventing natural regeneration). The latter threat was not being addressed so I obtained funding to begin to tackle this.

### No.3 – Emergent AWL. (January 2023 -):

This project is turning out differently than first imagined. For one thing, I have assistance from Eleanor Crome paid for as part of the grant, so am longer working on my own in terms of the day to day development of the project. The funders also set me a freeing and simple target – to look into the setting up of a group. We knew it would be a sensitive process involving one to one conversations with landowners and managers.

## Reflections (continued)

### Cycle no.3 (cont)

These sensitive conversations made me realise the project was all about relationship-building first and foremost rather than rewilding as such, about building solid trust-based relationships with people who may have very different outlooks and lifestyles to myself.

### Principles

This put me in mind of Looby's cultural emergence principles and reading through them I realized I was already using some of them. So now I am reading through of them, seeking to understand them more and apply them to the rest of the project as it unfolds throughout the rest of the year.

### Wisdom of cooperating hearts/Emergence happens in relationship

As AWL grows in number we have more sitting round the dinner table and this empowers as more offerings of workshops and hosting are made.

### Come into the light

I have a lot of experience of this through Quaker Meetings for Worship when – at times – we feel that the Meeting is “gathered” ie open to the Light. It is all about everyone present being open and expectant, with “hearts and minds prepared.” This makes me attuned to any gathering of people whether for an ordinary meeting, workshop, shared meal. It also means looking at the shadows: at our last workshop two of the participants questioned the need for what they saw as a prejudicial assault on all so-called “invasive” species. This led to a acknowledgement that if all humans disappeared from the earth, nature would survive and thrive and would deal with any “threats” that invasives posed.

## Use Emergence to support Emergence

Back last October as a result of a Gathering we attended in Oban by Reforesting Scotland, I invited a Lower Plants expert over to run a series of workshops. These have just happened – along with two other workshops that were originally to be for AWL members to gen up beforehand. However, these turned into successful family "hunts". All 3 sets of workshops were as much about relationship-building and nature connection as about plant identification and how to manage temperate rainforest. Also, the new people joining AWL are encouraging us as a group to try out new areas eg nature spirituality (using tuning forks, shamanic drums and making a labyrinth).

Looby talks about synergy v. emergence and AWL is definitely about emergence. The system still has a conservation/rewilding mission and goal but as we learn about the biodiversity of the area we are prompted to evolve our behaviours and attitudes and what we do.

## Step into the Unknown/You Only Protect what you Love

During my bioregion training I met up online with an Elder of the Pasmaqqady First Nation People. Upon hearing from me that we still had healthy numbers of kelp and pollack in our waters he replied: "You must save them from disappearing from our coasts as they have from ours." Amongst his people the Pollack is a particularly sacred fish and they mourn its loss to their waters. This has acted as an injunction, an imperative: it is something I have now been called on to do. This has led me on to keep thinking of the famous saying: "You only protect what you love". I now think that in order for AWL to succeed in its mission it first has to help the people of the area take notice of the riches (in terms of mosses, lichens and liverworts – many of which need a hand lens to be seen) on their doorstep; then and only then will they protect them. So I want to be part of a change of culture, a move to a culture that appreciates plants not just as food but as vital communities that protect us in so many ways.

Allow for the possibility of the seemingly impossible: the re-introduction of wolf and lynx?