

Review of the year.

The past year has been a bit of a headline grabber.

We had the largest number of apple days - 4 instead of the usual 1, when we welcomed Woodland Trust donors. The usual, public day in the orchard enjoyed record attendance of around 200 people. We had our biggest and most complicated event - the nest box project, with thanks to Kinross Men's Shed and the primary school. We had large numbers of volunteers helping to pull birch and we saw the publication of two management plans, thanks to WTS.

We also staged a new and eccentric event - wassailing in the orchard, which was great fun but appears to have had little impact on the quantity of fruit.

At the end of last year a lovely 15 minute programme about the Moss, by Ranger Hamza, went out on CBeebies and is still available on iPlayer.

There's been a lot of collaboration. We've worked with range of other people and organisations - a very informative trip to Bankhead Moss in Fife, which is owned by the Scottish Wildlife Trust; an interesting visit by the head of the UK's Peatland programme at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Also, ongoing co-operation with the Perth and Kinross Biodiversity Partnership and the Forth Rivers Trust, with a view to investment and joining up habitat and wildlife in this area. We not only contributed to Portmoak Festival, with bird song walks and music, but thanks to their funding, published another booklet - Biotastic.

We've also been pleased to welcome two St Andrew's students, Natasha Currie and Jessica Westworth, who have completed amazing projects on the Moss.

I've been incredibly grateful for our new management committee, who've all been on a bit of a learning curve - and to the old committee, who've supported us.

It's also been lovely to have new, regular members at our group meetings as well as some new volunteers. I was going to thank everyone

individually but you all contribute so much that we'd have been here all night.

All in all, a great 12 months but there's still much to do. Looking ahead I'm well aware of everyone's concern about how much birch regeneration we're seeing this year and I hope a solution to that can be found quickly - as well as getting a response from Peatland Action, sooner rather than later, so that we can be sure that the Moss restoration project is on a firm footing. We need to put renewed effort into attracting and keeping new volunteers so that we can be sure this fantastic group also has a strong future.