



# PRO SILVA EUROPE

## Annual Meeting

University of Stirling, Scotland 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> September 2016



Pro Silva Europe held their Annual Meeting in Scotland at the University of Stirling from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The Meeting was attended by forty-nine delegates from across the European continent. Since Pro Silva Europe advocates the use of Close-to-Nature forestry principles and promotes the use of irregular silviculture, the event created a great opportunity to discuss the challenges Scottish foresters face regarding the application of Close-to-Nature forestry.

The great majority of Scottish forests are comprised of introduced tree species that are usually managed under the clearcutting system, where the timber crop is entirely removed and a new crop is established following felling. Scotland offers some examples of Continuous Cover Forestry that were set up by one of the great Scottish forestry academics of the last century (Prof. Mark Anderson). However, there are still strong cultural barriers to a wider adoption of irregular silvicultural practices in spite of the increasing demand for ecosystem services and for integrated cost-effective delivery. The major proportion of Scottish forests is formed by a non-native Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*); a coniferous species of North American origin.

## Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June

The Annual Meeting started with the Business Meeting where the members of Pro Silva Europe's Board presented organisation's developments that took place since the last Annual Meeting held at the end of September 2015 in the Czech Republic. Plans for the upcoming year including organisation of the next Annual Meeting that will take place in Romania were also discussed. The Business Meeting was followed by Charlie Taylor's (Forestry Commission Scotland) presentation on Scottish forestry in order to give the Meeting participants some background information on the nature of Scottish forests and the ways they are managed.

In the afternoon, the Pro Silva delegates visited planted forests near Aberfoyle where they were showed several examples of Scottish traditional forestry practices that are still driven mainly by clearcutting practices. Individual stops included the visits to Sitka spruce stands of various ages. This included the forest stands where no silvicultural practices are applied and where the stands are left to a natural development. This decision is mainly driven by a high windthrow risk. An older forest stand dominated by Sitka spruce where prolific natural regeneration occurs was also visited; the discussion focused on deer management and transformation processes towards irregular forest stand structure taking the present natural regeneration into an account.



The day was concluded with an evening presentation by Dr John Calladine (British Trust for Ornithology, Scotland) on 'The effect of different forest management approaches on bird populations in Britain'.

## Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September

Glenmore Forest in the Cairngorms National Park was visited in the morning where the ecological and cultural values of the native Scottish pinewoods (*Pinus sylvestris*) were discussed. The history of the Glenmore pinewoods and the current policies regarding their restoration were covered. The current management actions and plans in the National Park include gradual removal of non-native lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) in order to expand native Scots pine. Removal of Sitka spruce regeneration sporadically appearing in the native forest habitats dominated by Scots pine is also being removed in order to restore native tree species composition where birch (*Betula* spp.) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) also appear.



The excursion in the afternoon led the Meeting participants into Scots pine forests of Loch Vaa Forest on the Seafield Estate. The roles of shelterwood systems in native pinewoods that are managed for multifunctional objectives were discussed. Topics such as thinning practices used to enhance structural diversity of the stands and deer management practices aimed to achieve healthy natural regeneration levels were included. The scenic values of the area are rather high as demonstrated in the pictures below, especially when taking into an account a nearby Loch Vaa ('loch' is a Scottish expression for 'lake').



## Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September

Craigvinean forest in the Tay Valley and some of its Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) forests were visited in the morning on the third day of the Meeting. The development of structural diversity in forest stands dominated by Douglas fir were discussed as well as the high wind risk hazards in stands where the major component of the species composition is Sitka spruce, which is a species susceptible to wind damage. Thinning operations, marking trees for thinning and related activities were also discussed.

The afternoon of the last day of the meeting was dedicated to the visit to Faskally Forest in Perthshire. Since it was initiated in the 1950's it is one of the oldest transformation experiment to Continuous Cover Forestry in Britain. Various aspects of transformation management were discussed during this field day: this included Continuous Cover Forest management in relation to recreational pressures and the manipulation of the stand structure and species composition in order to meet a variety of objectives. Faskally forest has a diverse species composition with some of the species showed below:



Issued on behalf of Pro Silva Europe

Photos by Lucie Vítková and Eckart Senitza

More information can be found on: [www.prosilvaeurope.org](http://www.prosilvaeurope.org)