Perthshire man’s epic coast-to-coast hike across Canada to help rewild the Highlands

Friday 8 October, 2021

In 1867, legendary Scots naturalist John Muir completed a famous 1,000-mile journey on foot across North America from Kentucky to the Gulf Coast. More than a century and a half later, 32-year-old musician Michael Yellowlees, from Dunkeld in Perthshire, is on course to emulate that famous feat five times over – by walking across Canada from the shores of the Pacific Ocean to the east coast of Newfoundland on the edge of the North Atlantic.

The idea for the trek – which is raising funds for Highlands-based rewilding charity Trees for Life – germinated three years ago while Michael was walking in the Scottish Highlands.

“It is a beautiful landscape but with a strong sense of sadness because of the absence of woodland, wildlife and people,” Michael recalls.

“So I decided then to walk across the great wildernesses of Canada to raise funds for Trees for Life and its work to restore Scotland’s Caledonian Forest, at a time when the world is on high alert over climate chaos and biodiversity loss.”

After working for a spell in Vancouver, looking after sled dogs to help fund his venture, Michael set off in March for the great trek eastwards – a solitary figure in a kilt, with his guitar and a few other belongings in a handcart, and an Alaskan husky called Luna by his side.

Along the way he has experienced adventures aplenty. He has encountered black bears and listened to the howling of wolves.

When following a waterway section of the Great Canada Trail by canoe, Luna jumped out and became lost in the dense wilderness in an area of Northern Ontario. “I was totally distraught. For months, we had been best friends and had looked after one another,” said Michael.

Aided by local volunteers, Michael spent a week searching in vain for his lost companion. “After seven days and seven nights, just as I was giving up all hope, Luna appeared like an apparition, strolling casually back as though nothing had happened – though she had lost some weight.”

If that week was the lowest point of the journey there have been plenty of highs – not least the reception from the Canada public.

“The warmth of the people has been amazing. In every town and village people have offered me food, shelter and donations. So much kindness. I’ve been accompanied into towns and cities by marching pipe bands and interviewed in newspapers, radio and TV,” said Michael.

Steve Micklewright, Chief Executive of Trees for Life, said: "We have been following Michael's journey across Canada with awe and admiration. Restoring native habitats and wildlife to the Scottish Highlands is a big task that no one can do alone. But Michael’s extraordinary trek is proof of the power of the individual to make a difference.”

A family friend back in Perthshire, Bob Davidson, said: “It's epic what he's doing. I've known Michael since he was 10 years old. This is not a stroll in the park, but an 8,000-kilometre yomp at an incredible pace with Luna. He's just an amazing guy, always has been and always will be. Hats off to him.”

Michael – a former pupil of Breadalbane Academy – is currently in Quebec, after trekking across British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. He expects to arrive at his final destination – the headland of Cape Spear in Newfoundland – in early November.

Trees for Life is dedicated to rewilding the Scottish Highlands. Its volunteers have established nearly two million native trees at dozens of sites, encouraging wildlife to flourish and helping communities to thrive.

The charity recently announced Affric Highlands – a 30-year landscape-scale rewilding initiative to restore nature across an area of over 500,000 acres stretching from Loch Ness across the central Highlands to Kintail in the west, and encompassing Glens Cannich, Affric, Moriston and Shiel. The community driven venture aims to tackle the nature and climate emergencies, and create social and

Media:



Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits ::
Environment & Nature ::

Related Keywords:

Climate :: Nature :: Biodiversity ::
Highlands :: Scotland ::
Rewilding :: Wildlife ::

Scan Me:

economic opportunities in the region.

To support Michael and Luna’s fundraising on their rewilding journey, please visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/michaelandlunarewild.

Company Contact:

Trees for Life

T. 07753 488146
E. richardbunting@gmail.com
W. https://www.treesforlife.org.uk

View Online

Additional Assets:

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.treesforlife.pressat.co.uk