

# HIGHLAND ANIMAL HOMES

**A COUNTRYSIDE RANGERS  
PROJECT**



A Bat box being installed



2025/26

# Aim: to increase the availability of suitable nesting and shelter sites for wildlife through community engagement and practical action

## INTRODUCTION

Across the Highlands, many species face increasing pressure from habitat loss, changes in land use and a declining availability of natural nesting and shelter sites.

The Highland Animal Homes Project was developed to respond to this need through a combination of practical habitat creation and community engagement. The project focused on creating and installing a range of wildlife homes, including hedgehog boxes for winter shelter, bird boxes for gardens and community spaces, owl boxes for secure nesting and bat boxes for summer roosting.

A key principle was participation, with community groups, schools and volunteers actively involved in building and placing the boxes. This approach linked practical conservation action with local engagement, helping to build skills, awareness and a stronger connection to the natural environment.



An image of batboxes





# Project Delivery

The project was delivered through a combination of kit production and community-based assembly, supported by a mix of structured sessions and informal events.

Wildlife box components were prepared in advance by Inverness Men's Shed and Fort William Men's Shed, providing high-quality kits with donated timber, that could be used across a range of settings. These kits were then assembled during ranger-led activities with schools, nature clubs and community groups, enabling participants to be directly involved in creating wildlife homes. Delivery included both planned sessions and more flexible, drop-in opportunities.

The Ullapool element of the project was funded by the Lochbroom & Ullapool Community Trust Community Benefit Fund and focused on addressing a local need for animal boxes in and around the Ullapool area.

A notable example was a community workshop event at Ullapool ferry car park in September, where 27 participants took part in building hedgehog boxes and decorating bird boxes. Alongside this, sessions in libraries and primary schools extended the reach of the project, allowing more young people to engage with practical conservation activity.

This whole approach enabled efficient production of wildlife boxes while maximising participation, ensuring that the project delivered both tangible habitat outcomes and meaningful community involvement.

Boxes were then installed during follow-on sessions and site visits, placing them in suitable locations across communities, school grounds and wider Highland habitats.

# 76

Bat Boxes

# 8

Owl Boxes

# 30+

Over 30 bird boxes of various sizes

# 12

Hedgehog boxes

# Over 120 animal homes created

Through these activities, over 120 homes for wildlife were created, including 12 hedgehog boxes, 76 bat boxes, 8 owl boxes and over 30 bird boxes of various sizes.

At the time of reporting, approximately 50% of boxes have been deployed across the Highlands, with installation ongoing across a range of suitable habitats including community spaces, school grounds and woodland edges.



Hedgehog box in Ullapool



Animal Home Workshop  
in Ullapool

# Key Outcomes

The project engaged over **90 individuals** through community events, school sessions and nature-based activities, demonstrating strong levels of participation across a range of settings.

Partnership working was a significant strength of the project, enabling the efficient production of materials while fostering strong local involvement. The combination of kit production through Men's Sheds and assembly through community sessions provided an effective and replicable delivery model.

The project also supported informal skills development, with many participants reporting gaining confidence through practical, hands-on experience. While ecological outcomes will take time to fully assess, the project has already increased habitat availability and strengthened awareness and engagement with local wildlife.

The project has supported targeted conservation needs, particularly through the provision of hedgehog boxes linked to rehabilitation and release, helping address a shortage of suitable shelter in Ullapool. At the same time, bat and owl boxes have expanded opportunities for species reliant on scarce nesting and roosting sites across a wider geographic area.

# Conclusion

The Highland Animal Homes Project demonstrates how practical conservation, when combined with community involvement, can deliver meaningful outcomes at a regional scale. By engaging people directly in building and installing wildlife homes, the project has strengthened both habitat provision and community connection to nature across the Highlands, with boxes distributed from Lochaber to Inverness, and Ullapool to as far north as Caithness.

The collaborative approach has been central to its success, demonstrating the value of local skills, shared spaces and partnership working. It has also created inclusive opportunities for participation, with hands-on activities supporting confidence-building and practical skills development, including notable engagement from women participating alongside their children.

As installation continues and the boxes begin to be used by wildlife, the longer-term impact will become clearer, building on the strong foundations already established.



Photo of newly built hedgehog boxes

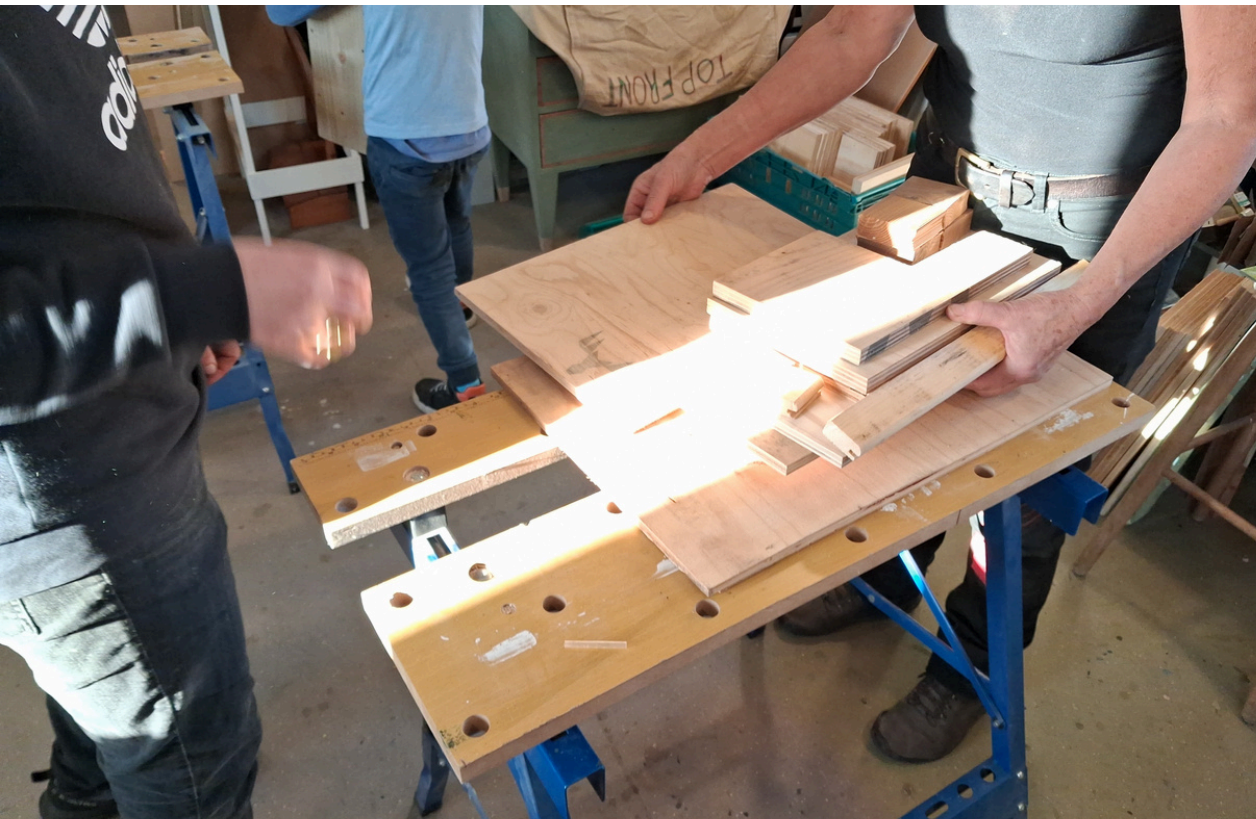
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Lochbroom & Ullapool Community Trust Community Benefit Fund for supporting the Ullapool element of the project.

Thanks are also due to Inverness Men's Shed and Fort William Men's Shed for constructing wildlife boxes, and to BSW Sawmill, Corpach for supplying timber. We are grateful to the Ullapool Harbour Trust for use of their community workshop space, which enabled practical delivery of sessions.

We would particularly like to recognise the support of Emma Planterose and Nat Wilson in Ullapool, whose skills and contribution were instrumental in delivering successful community workshops.

Finally, we thank all schools, community groups, volunteers and participants whose enthusiasm and involvement made the project possible





**highlife**

highland  
na Gàidhealtachd

**MAKING  
LIFE  
BETTER**



Photo of an insect home being installed in Lochaber by high school pupils



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