

## AL FRESCO FILM FESTIVAL

Peebles Outdoor Film Festival takes place from January 26 to 28.

The popular weekend event in the Borders includes a mix of adventure films, workshops and guided activities.

There is also a great line up of guest speakers, including Jasmin Paris, Lucy Colquhoun Greg Boswell and Paul Diffley.

See [www.eastgatearts.com](http://www.eastgatearts.com) and Peebles Outdoor Film Festival on Facebook

## TRUST ARE AT THE DOUBLE

The Scottish Wildlife Trust have won two awards at the 2017 Nature of Scotland Awards.

The awards celebrate and recognise the best of conservation in Scotland.

A Cumbernauld Living Landscape project received the Youth and Education award.

Meanwhile, the North West Highlands Snorkel Trail was awarded the prize for Nature Tourism.

Both projects seek to create new connections between people and wildlife.

See [www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk) for more information.

## GEAR OF THE WEEK

### MSR TrailShot water filter

A new MSR TrailShot Microfilter is a useful gadget for outdoors enthusiasts who require clean water while walking, running or mountain biking.

The pocket-size TrailShot is small, portable and easy to use.

Simply drop the hose into the water source, squeeze the filter and squirt clean water into your mouth, bottle or reservoir.

Jeff Browning, a Patagonia Trail Ambassador and Altra Endurance Team athlete, has been testing the TrailShot in Owyhee Canyon in Oregon in the US.

He said: "It's the first filter I will actually carry regularly on long training runs in the mountains."

"Everything else has always been clunky or too heavy when trying to stay light and fast."

"I was able to carry the TrailShot in the side pocket of my shorts."

The MSR TrailShot Microfilter costs from about £34 online and is also available in good outdoor shops.



**OFF TO A FLIER**  
Entrants do as many laps as they can in the time given. Picture: Cameron Mason

### SCOTTISH XC RACES 2018:

The line up of races includes:

March 18: Glentress, near Peebles

April 8: Dalbeattie, Dumfries & Galloway

April 29: Cathkin Braes, near Glasgow

May 13: XC British Round at Glentress

June 17: Lochore Meadows, Fife

September 2: Dunoon, Cowal Peninsula,

which is also the Scottish Championships

September 16: Laggan Wolftrax, Highlands

# Lapping up life on cross country cycle



**FIONA  
RUSSELL**

Saddle up and get yourself involved in a new biking challenge

### Have you tried?

Scottish XC

**What is it?** It's cross-country mountain bike racing.

**Tell me more?** The annual Scottish Cross-Country (SXC) series includes six races that take place from March to September.

In 2018, there is an additional seventh race, which is also a round of the British XC series.

Mountain bike riders complete as many laps of about four miles as possible in a set time.

Most races will last between 30 minutes and around 90 minutes, depending on the race category and age. The series has races from children aged eight to super-vets (60+).

Last year, a new race age category was introduced to bridge the gap between eight to 12s and youths.

Iain Grant, the chair of SXC, said: "There is a fast growing group of children who want to race in the Scottish XC."

"With this in mind we added a new age category, 12 to 14s, to offer them their own challenge."

In 2018, again to meet demand, there will be a new "taster" women's race at each event.

Iain said: "We had feedback from many women, who said they would like to have their own entry-level race. They want to give these sorts of races a try but on a course that's solely for them."

"We have been delighted to organise this and we are hoping to see good levels of interest."

### What can riders expect?

The average SXC race



### PEDAL POWER

On SXC route includes a mix of terrain and challenges and each course varies according to location.

There will normally be a mix of forestry tracks and singletrack.

Races are technical in places, although organisers do offer "B-lines" so riders can avoid more tricky sections.

Iain added: "If riders chose to race the A-line, they will need to be able to ride more technical sections."

"The A-line route is the fastest way around a course."

"But to cater for those who want to ride in the races but are not as experienced technically there is a B-line."

Fitness, strength and technical ability are critical for the most competitive riders, while the "taster" races are more relaxed.

Mountain bike riders aim to

complete as many laps on off-road courses in a set time.

### Anything else to know?

It's important to train for a race, including off-road skills and strength and fitness building.

The course for each round opens the day before for practising.

Many riders will spend a weekend in each location for the races so they can do practice rides the day before the race day.

A new organising group took over the Scottish XC series in 2017.

A team of seven, including five from Peebles Cycling Club, aim to increase the numbers competing in the races.

Iain said: "Our aim in 2017 was to grow race entries by 50 per cent, which we did manage to achieve."

"We would like to continue to grow each race and to attract more men and women and well as kids."

"To have a British round taking place at Glentress this year is also a big bonus."

"We are very pleased that we have been able to add this date to the series programme."

**What kit do I need?** Most people ride SXC on a cross-country mountain bike although you can use any pedal-powered bike you want.

Clothing is your own choice but padded sorts will help with comfort, as will gloves.

The essential SXC kit list includes a helmet and bar plugs.

Contact: [www.sxc.org.uk/](http://www.sxc.org.uk/)