

Megan Rowland

Age: 27

Location: Highlands and Islands, Scotland

 @Wayfaringhind



Main Challenges



Awareness of Rural Careers



Connectivity



Social change

Background

Megan is a professional deer stalker and land manager based in Sutherland in the Scottish Highlands. A driven and passionate young woman, Megan has shown fantastic leadership in a sector that has historically been dominated by males. Not only determined to bring greater transparency to her profession which she says, “can get lumped in with factory farming and trophy hunting”.

Megan is also committed to connecting other women to land based careers. She was awarded the Lantra Scotland Land Based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year award 2018 in recognition of her achievements.

Passionate about her role, Megan says, “My job lets me see some wonderful parts of the Scottish Highlands. The space, the wildlife, the quiet atmosphere, and the clean air is something I really appreciate. I also love meeting other folk from all over the world.”

Following 18 years as a vegetarian and beginning her career in ecological conservation, it can seem somewhat surprising how Megan now spends her days, which includes stalking deer and butchering them herself.

Megan is committed to educating people about the role of this practice in sustainable meat production, land management and conservation. She is effectively doing this through her social media updates, vlogging with Rural Youth Project and seizing public speaking opportunities with organisations such as ‘Women in wellies’. In fact, it was following her twitter documentation of her experiences during a placement on a pheasant shoot that led to her current role as Assistant Land Manager on an estate in Strath Brora.

Rural Youth Project Involvement

Megan attended the 2018 Ideas Festival and is a Rural Youth Project vlogger

“There’s a lack of opportunity for children and young people to get outdoors and learn from more ‘hands on’ experience in primary and secondary schools.”



Image: Megan Rowland

“If someone wants to work in this profession, the fact that nobody else is doing it, that none of their friends are doing it – they shouldn’t let that stop them. It leads to some of the most satisfying and great days you could possibly have”

- Megan Rowland

Background

Megan’s career path to date has not been direct and she is keen to open others’ eyes to the variety of experiences that are available to them. For Megan, it was chapters of volunteering and interning for conservation and land-based organisations that gave her the breadth of experience she needed to gain a clear picture of what she wanted to do in the sector.

Megan is adamant that, as a woman, she has not been impeded in her profession from a practical perspective; “there’s always a winch or teamwork for heavy lifting!”. Occasionally, however, she has found it challenging socially, particularly with clients who have doubted her abilities more than her male counterparts.

She also notes that, “rural life focuses on community and everyone looks out for each other it can also bring with it very traditional views and I see this in the Highlands where breaking the perceived gender roles (being female in a ‘man’s world’) is often met with suspicion, rather than being seen as a positive.”

Megan is becoming a key mouthpiece representing women in land-based professions and she is keen to see change going forward stating, “it’s been the preserve of men for ages to put on a backpack and head out into the wilderness – well it’s more than past time that women and young people got a chance to do it too”.

Aware that women are underrepresented in the sector she says, “if someone wants to work in this profession, the fact that nobody else is doing it, none of their friends are doing it – they shouldn’t let that stop them - it leads to some of the most satisfying and great days you could possibly have”

Megan recognises that for the status quo to shift then intervention needs to start earlier; making young people aware of rural careers. She highlights that despite living in rural areas, “there is a lack of opportunity for children and young people to get outdoors and learn from more “hands on” experience in primary and secondary schools”. She suggests, “It would be great to see more workshops, lessons and trips teaching the younger generation about rural subjects such as forestry, farming and wildlife.”

Solutions

1. Don’t be afraid to step out on your own and challenge the status quo – sometimes you have to ‘be the change you want to see’!
2. Volunteer to get a wide range of experience – these insights and connections will be invaluable.
3. Meet lots of people working in a variety of land-based professions – listen to their experiences– you will undoubtedly learn something, and it might not be as you anticipate.

We’re social!

-  @Rural Youth Project
-  @RYP2018
-  @RYP2018
-  Rural Youth Podcast
-  Rural Youth Project

The Rural Youth Project is kindly supported by:

