

John's love of the great outdoors inspires book

by Catherine MacGillivray

Outdoors enthusiasts should be on track this summer with a new book about walking and cycling around Inverness and the Highlands.

Written and published as a labour of love by Inverness journalist John Davidson, the book is a personal collection of 50 routes ranging from easy family strolls to epic mountain adventures.

With photos to illustrate every route, as well as clear sketch maps, the pocket-sized guide is perfect for planning an adventure or taking out on the trails.

John Davidson's *Guide to Walking and Cycling in Inverness and the Highlands* suggests 25 walking routes and 25 cycle routes which John has undertaken.

Some of the routes are centred on Inverness but the book covers an area from Fort Augustus and Newtonmore in the south to Durness in the north west.

"I hope the range of routes will be an inspiration to local people and visitors to the area to get out and about and explore the beautiful places in the Highlands," says John. "I love the outdoors, going into the mountains, cycling or just going for a plod."

Originally from Bolton, John (31) has been writing an "Active Outdoors" column for the

Inverness Courier since May 2008 and also contributes "wild walk" features for leading hill walking and backpacking magazine *TGO*.

He is also a volunteer for Sustrans, the charity behind the National Cycle Network.

"I started exploring most of the routes around 18 months ago and began the book in earnest about a year ago," he says. "The writing was done route by route over that time, while the maps were done towards the end, in the last three to four months."

John was inspired to write the guide as he has discovered so many great places while writing the newspaper column.

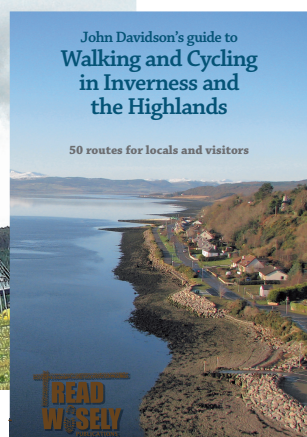
"Some of the routes are the result of community efforts to retain access in their own areas, and they are not necessarily well publicised, while some of the well-known routes are so good they should be explored again and again," he says. "I wanted to share all these places I had discovered and a few readers had said to me they wanted something they could carry with them, rather than the broadsheet newsprint. I thought a book would be a great way to share my experience of the great outdoors with even more people."

One of John's favourite cycling routes is around the north west Highlands with an overnight stop in Durness but, equally, he enjoys getting on his bike closer to home in the Black Isle and Nairnshire.

"For walking, I think Glen Affric takes some beating and there are so many other places to explore there," he says. "It's great to have such a wonderful place just a stone's throw away."

When not on the hills or trails, John lives quietly at home in Inverness with his wife Meg and the couple are looking forward to the arrival of their first baby, due in May.

● John Davidson's *Guide to Walking and Cycling in Inverness and the Highlands* is available from local bookshops and online at www.treadwiselypublications.com priced £7.99



Journalist and outdoors lover John Davidson's book is out this month